



**AGENDA**  
**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Date: July 1, 2015**  
Meridian Township Municipal Building  
**5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI**  
**Administrative Conference Room**

- A. Call Meeting to Order at 6:00 p.m.
- B. Public Remarks
- C. Approval of Agenda
- D. Approval of Minutes – June 3, 2015
- E. Communications/Announcements
- F. Old Business
  - 1. Township Website – RFP's
  - 2. Comcast Update and Budget Request
- G. New Business / Discussion Items
  - 1. 2016 Draft Budget Memo
  - 2. 5 Year Equipment Plan & Long Term Vision
- H. Reports
  - 1. Complaints/Compliments: Deborah Guthrie
  - 2. Video Service Provider(s):
    - a. Comcast Introduces Voice Controlled TV Remote (Press Release – Reference at June 3, 2015 meeting.)
  - 3. Communications Director Report: Deborah Guthrie
  - 4. Chair's Report: Walter Benenson
  - 5. Township Information: Ron Styka
  - 6. Programming: Deborah Guthrie
  - 7. Viewership/Promotions: Deborah Guthrie
    - a. Recap - Celebrate Downtown Okemos & Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Pedestrian Pathway Bridge.
  - 8. Finance: Deborah Guthrie
- I. Other Business & Announcements
- J. Public Remarks
- K. Adjournment

# **Cable Communications Commission Regular Meeting Minutes**

Administrative Conference Room  
Meridian Municipal Building, Okemos, MI

**DRAFT**

**June 3, 2015**

**Present:** Commissioners: Chair, Walter Benenson; Vice Chair, Patrick Crowley;  
Commissioner, Tunga Kiyak  
Staff: Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director and  
Andrea Smiley, Administrative Assistant  
Township: None  
Comcast: John Gardner, Comcast Sr. Manager Government  
Affairs  
AT&T: None  
Haslett Schools: None  
Okemos Schools: None

**Call Meeting to Order:** Chair, Benenson called the meeting to order at **6:05 pm.**

**Public Remarks:** No Public Present

## **Approval of Agenda:**

Chair, Walter Benenson moved **TO APPROVE AGENDA AS SUBMITTED.**

Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

Vice Chair, Crowley moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF** June 3, 2015. Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak

Voice vote: Motion carried unanimously.

## **Communications/Announcements:**

1. Resident Concern – New Construction Areas

Chair Benenson asked the question how this insert pertained to the CCC. Director Guthrie responded that it was included in the packet because of the positive comment about HOMTV. Vice Chair, Crowley noted the document received and filed.

## **Old Business:**

1. AT&T Audit Finalized
  - a. AT&T settlement agreement

Director Guthrie started the discussion by asking for any questions. Commissioner, Kiyak asked if the company still goes by Michigan Bell. John Gardner provided explanation comparing to when Comcast was called TCI Cable. Director Guthrie commented that she received over \$11,000 dollars from the audit but it was about \$1,000 short of the costs. Director Guthrie also commented that if audits are done in the future (every two years), the Township would gain more money each time, because now the costs will be less considering all the prep work is done. She stated that she would also include the expense in the draft budget, to be provided at the July 1, 2015 CCC meeting.

2. Comcast
  - a. Franchise Agreement Renewal Update

Director Guthrie stated that she met with Comcast, John Gardner and Leslie Brogan, a couple times to discuss a side agreement to the initial Uniform Agreement that Comcast submitted to Meridian Township. They are looking into the points of interest in regards to the residents and the Township Board goals statement.

Another meeting is scheduled on Friday with the Township Manager and Director Guthrie stated that she hopes to have a resolution for the Uniform Agreement that was served to the Township. The deadline for a response is June 11, 2015. Director Guthrie is confident that everything will be worked out as a result of the Friday meeting.

- b. Township Website – RFP

Director Guthrie provided comments about the money budgeted and the need for the redesign to be done in phases. She also commented that about ½ a dozen companies were committed to submitting a proposal. Vice Chair, Crowley asked the question if the companies were large or small; there is a mix of local small business companies, as well as larger corporate size companies.

Chair Benenson asked the question in regards to selection of a company and whether the decision will be based on price. Director Guthrie responded that the criteria would be based on communication (ability to work with the company), phase process, requirements for redesign and pricing. Chair Benenson asked if there would be a grid sheet to tally the companies and Director Guthrie responded that the companies would be narrowed down to the top four based on meeting the requirements and pricing. At that point, the companies will be interviewed. The Township Board is motivated and committed to a new website that is user friendly with expanded ability to provide additional information to the community.

Director Guthrie commented that the RFP was sent out to approximately 25 companies, as well as being placed on the Township website.

Commissioner Kiyak commented about his concerns, again with data security and having features on the backend to protect people's identity, etc. Director Guthrie commented that the IT Director will be included in all the interviews and be able to ask the appropriate questions. Chair Benenson suggested that the IT Director attend the CCC meetings. Director Guthrie stated that he probably would if he was asked and Chair Benenson suggested that she "drop a hint" for him to attend some future meetings.

## **New Business:**

### 1. Cable Communications Commission Roles and Responsibilities

The discussion came about from a Township Goal that Commissioner Styka presented to the Commission concerning Wi Fi in the Township. Director Guthrie referred to a document showing the Responsibilities and Authority of the Commission.

Director Guthrie stated that it would be good to add to a future agenda and maybe also consider the HOMTV Rules and Procedures, as well as the Commission; maybe it becomes a 2016 goal. Chair Benenson commented that he watched the local broadband telecast and stated that some areas are already doing what Meridian Township is talking about.

Chair Benenson asked how to proceed with this process; do we make a motion that a Board Trustee would look at the future Roles and Responsibilities. Director Guthrie stated that the Commission would actually look at the current document and recommend any changes. Vice Chair, Crowley moved that the Commission give a proposal, to the Township Board, stating any changes to the Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission. This process will begin as new business in August and continue until completed; by the end of 2015. Vice Chair, Crowley also suggested that breakout sessions be held in October, 2015. Commissioner Kiyak seconded the motion. Chair Benenson restated for clarification that a document will be created to be transferred to the Board asking for changes to the Commissions Roles and Responsibilities.

Voice Vote: Motion carried unanimously

### 2. Online Packet Management

This process was recommended for the Township Clerk's Office because they oversee documents and records. The Commission recommended that Director Guthrie work with the Clerk's Office on demonstrations.

## **Reports:**

1. Cable Compliments/Complaints:

Commissioner Kiyak discussed his complaint with the Commission and the resolution provided by Comcast.

2. Video Service Provider(s):

John Gardner, Sr. Manager Government Affairs brought in a sample of Comcast's new Voice Activated Remote featuring backlit buttons. Also Comcast has a new App; Xfinity Share which allows live video streaming from a smartphone from one customer to another.

3. Communications Director's Report: Nothing to Report

4. Chair's Report: Nothing to Report.

5. Township Information: Director Guthrie announced a new Tavern and Tap Restaurant to be built in Downtown Okemos with apartments above the restaurant.

6. Programming: No discussion

7. Viewership/Promotions: No discussion

8. Finance: No discussion

**Other Business & Announcements:**

Director Guthrie announced that June 13, 2015 is the Celebrate Downtown Okemos event from 10 am – 11 pm with a Beer Tent, live bands, crafts and market place, etc.

**Public Remarks:** No Public Present

Commissioner Crowley moved **TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**. Seconded by Commissioner Kiyak.

Hearing no objections, Chair Benenson **ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 6:40 pm.**

**NEXT MEETING:**

The next scheduled meeting is **July 1, 2015 in the Administrative Conference Room.**

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN**

**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION**

**COMMUNICATIONS**

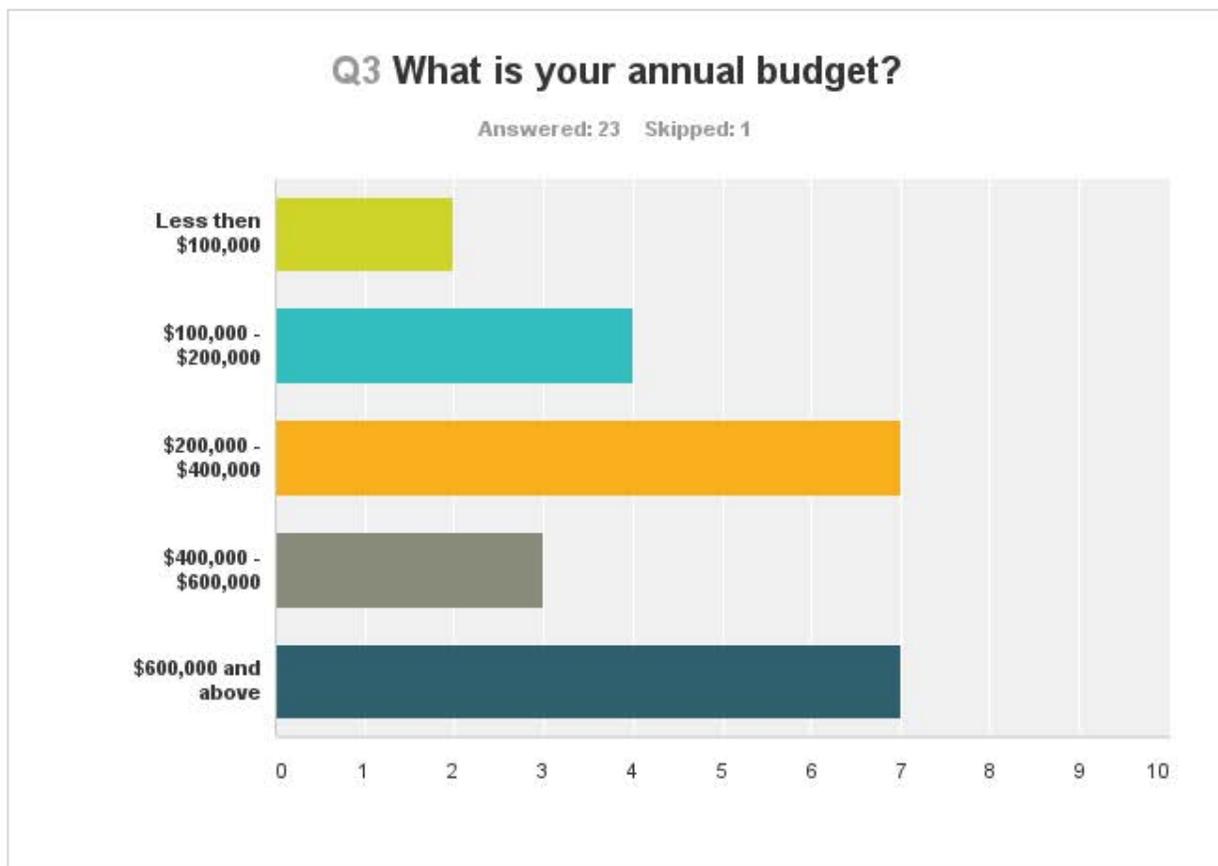
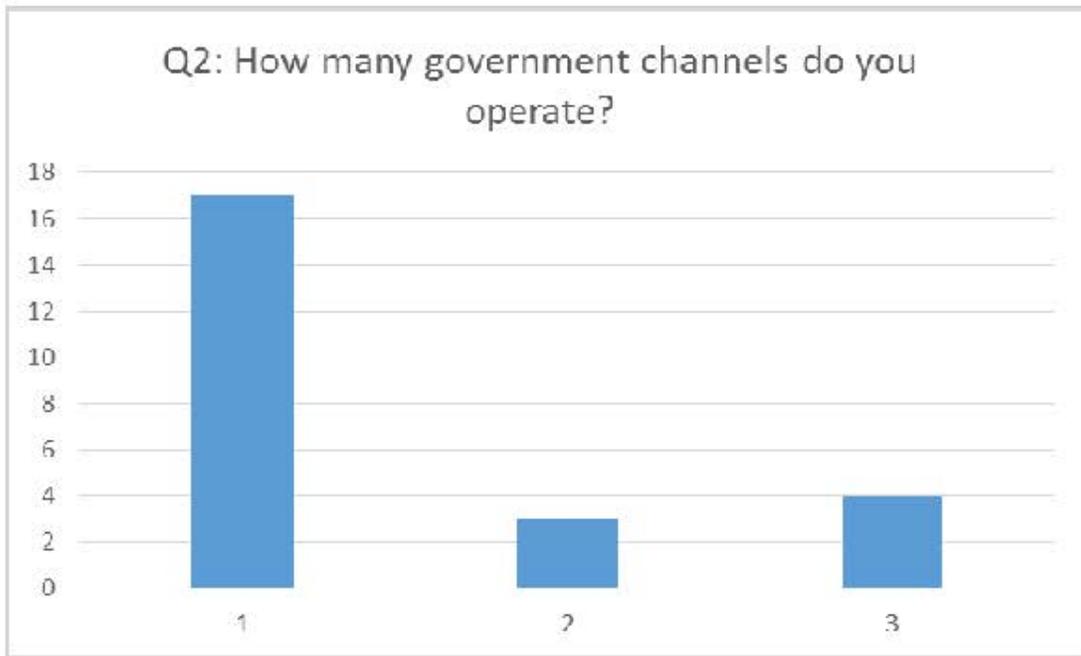
2015

**LIVONIA**  **television**  
*MOVING FORWARD*

W W W . L I V O N I A T V . U S

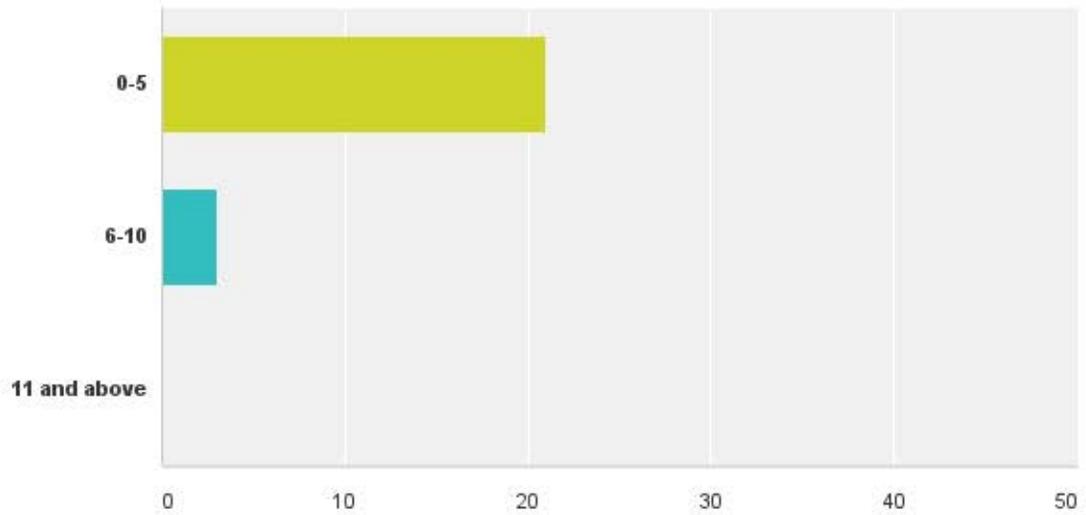
# Colleague Survey Results

**24 stations in Michigan responded to our survey.**



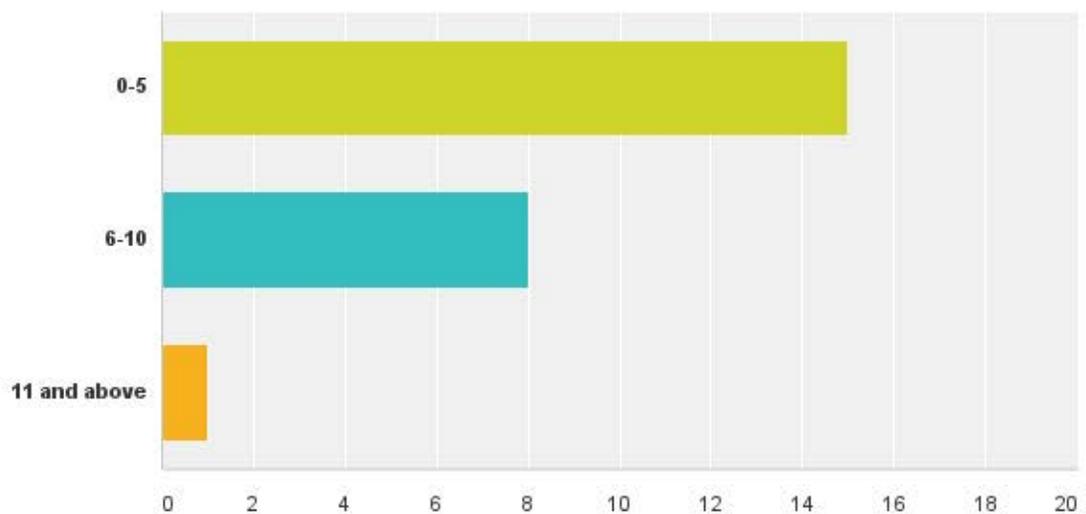
### Q4 How many full time production staff do you employ?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



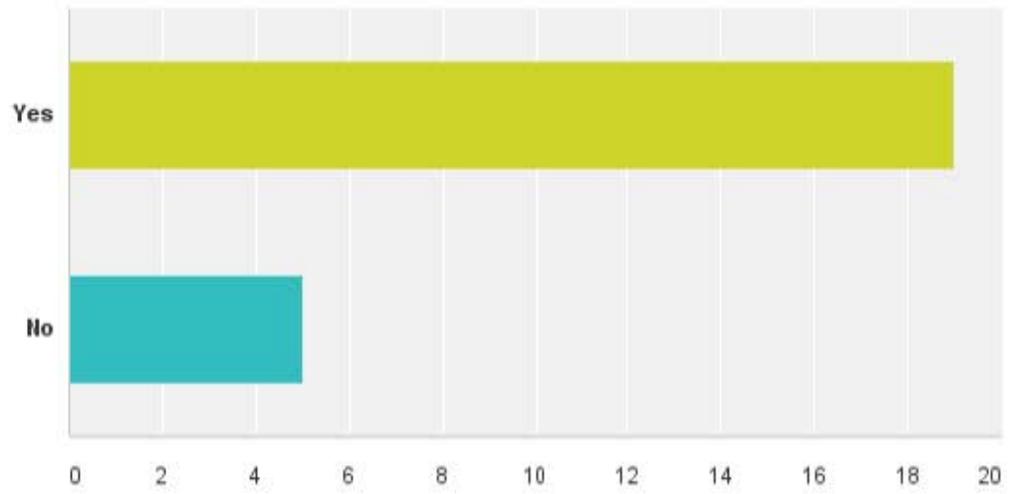
### Q5 How many part time staff do you employ?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



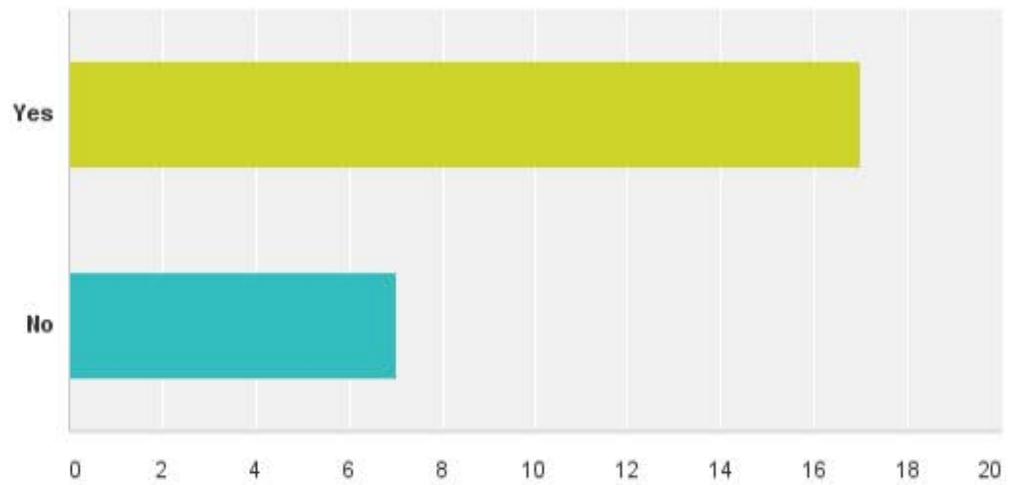
### Q6 Do you have interns?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



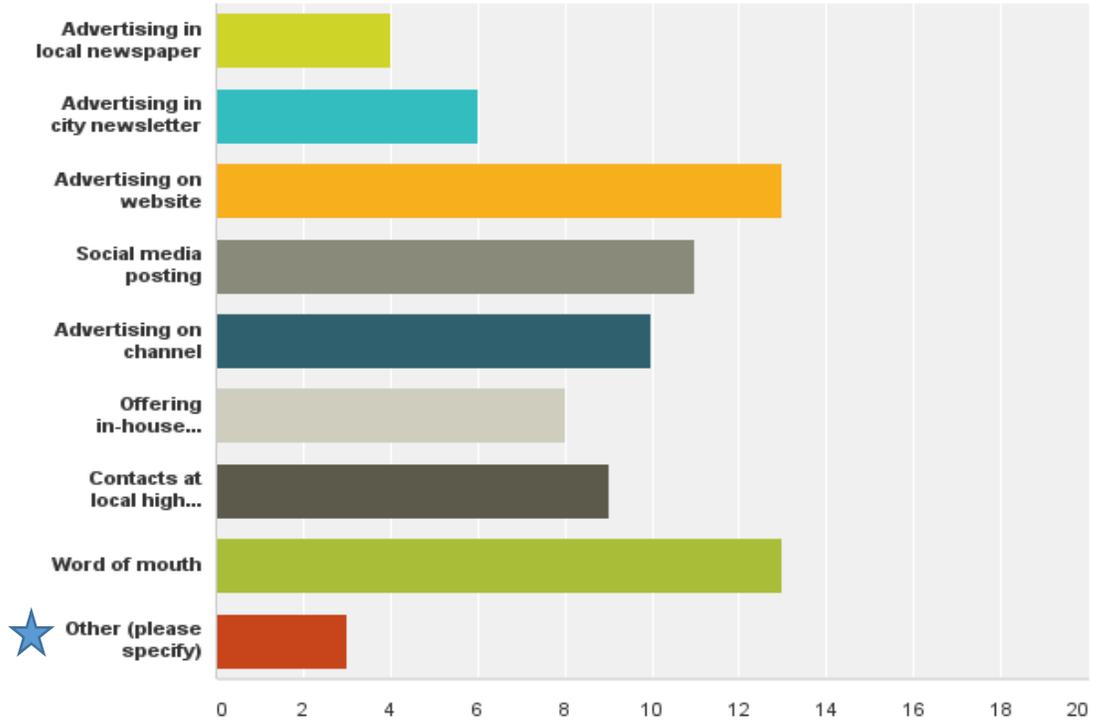
### Q7 Do you use volunteers?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

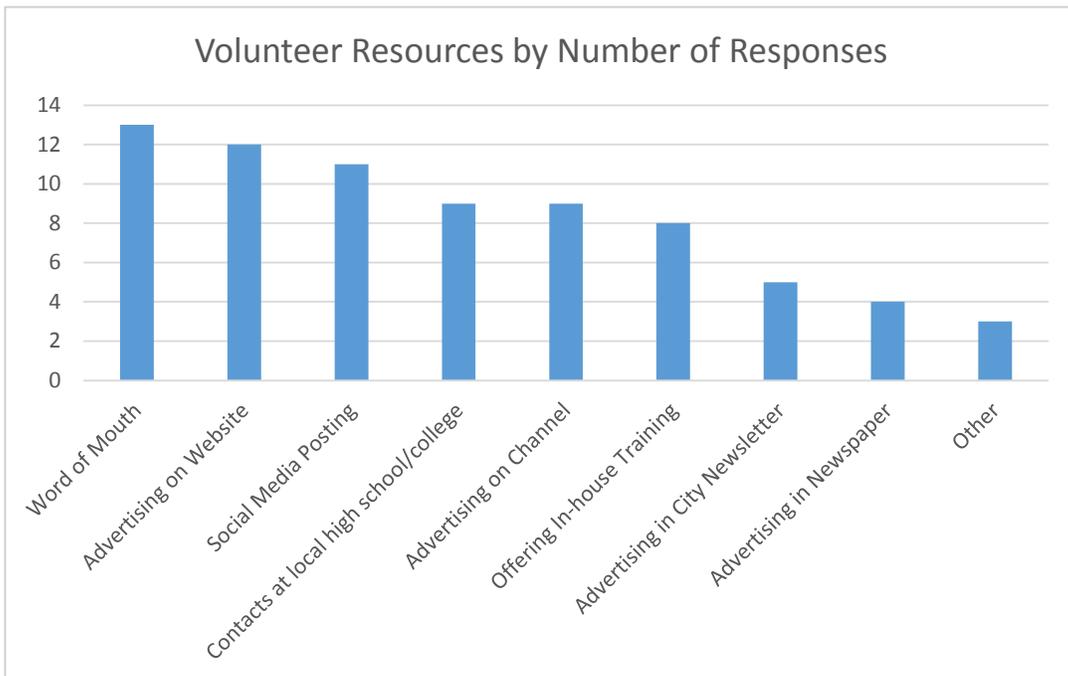


### Q8 If yes, what are your resources for finding volunteers?

Answered: 17 Skipped: 7

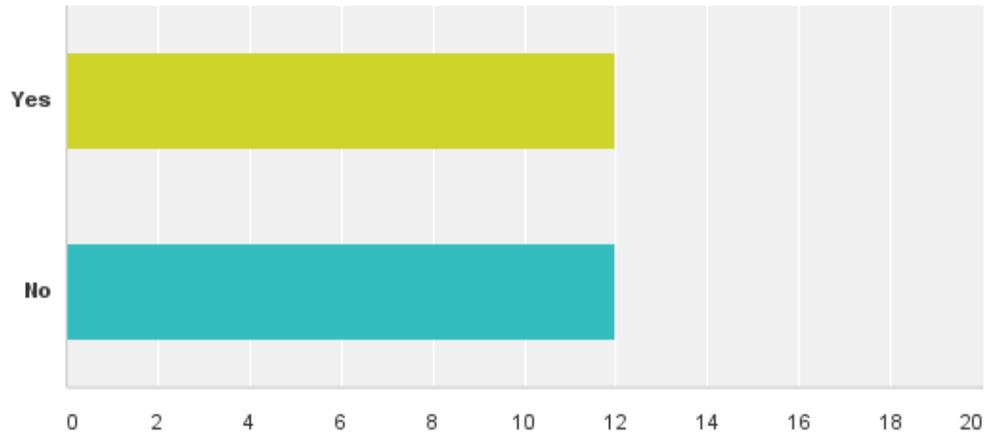


★ Responses in "Other": Email List, Speaking Engagements, Communications Commission



## Q9 Can you measure viewership/ get analytics on your audience in any way?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



## Q10: If yes, what methods do you use to get data on viewership?

- Subscriber survey.
- YouTube analytics, PEGcentral stats, survey monkey.
- PEG Central from Leightronix and programming placed on YouTube and directly on Facebook.
- YouTube has a lot of statistical info available about a variety of viewer data.
- Web analytics, not cable television.
- Yes is a misleading answer. We gather viewer analytics through our scheduling software, on-demand feature only.
- Just on the number of hits on online content.
- Just a little on YouTube.
- Analytics only from the website, nothing on the channel.
- We do utilize YouTube on certain programs and can tracks the number of views.
- We use Google Analytics, YouTube analytics, Facebook analytics. We get no data as to people actually watching on television.

**Q10: Continued:**

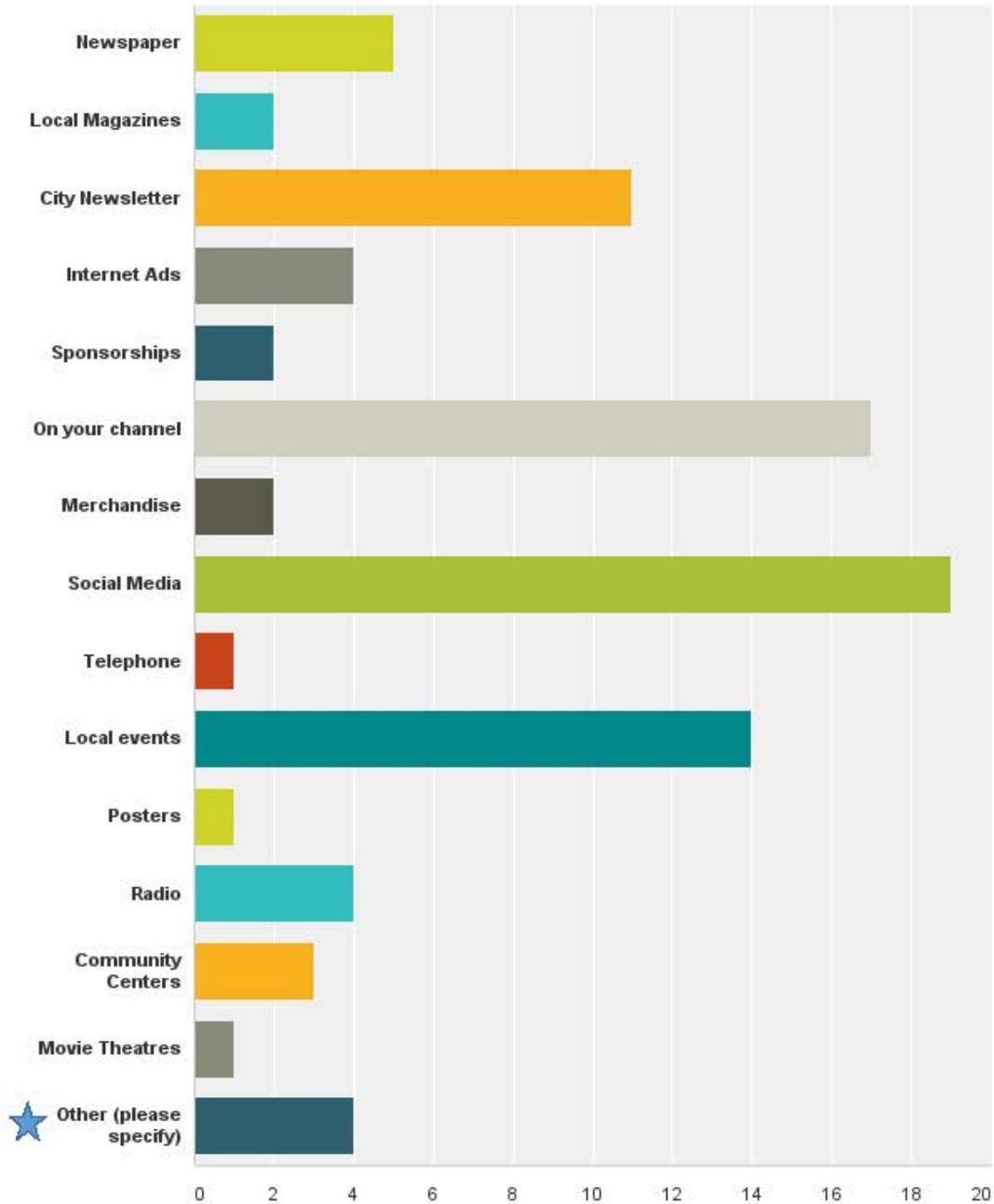
- Google analytics, site analytics, third party aggregators.
- Only on our livestream channel broadcast that keep track of viewer minutes.
- We desperately need viewership analytics, so any suggestions on how to obtain this would be greatly appreciated!
- Stats from YouTube and Vimeo.

**Synopsis**

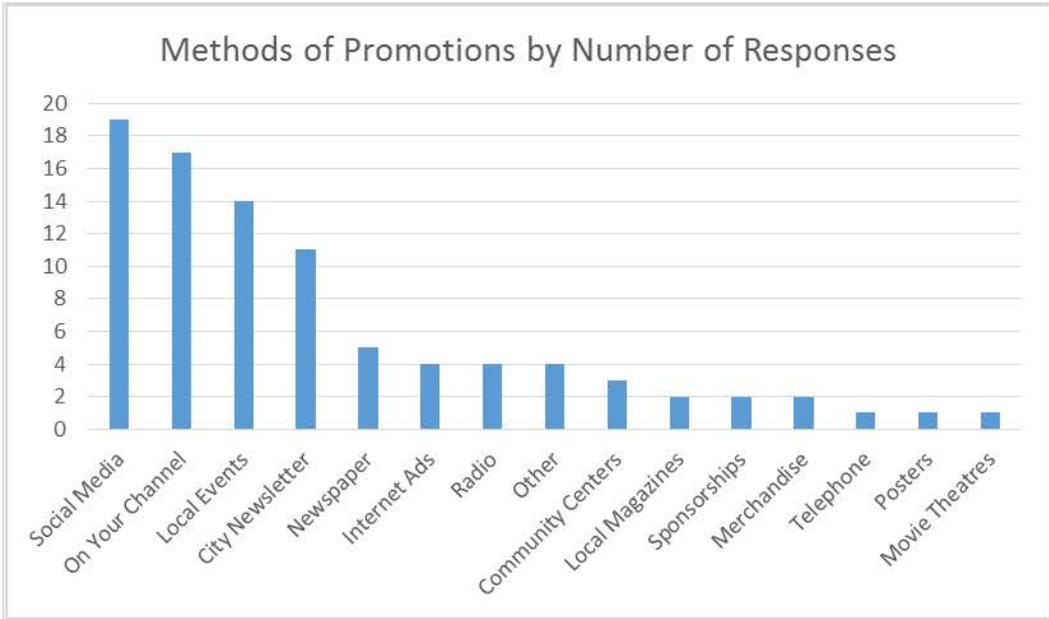
The most frequently mentioned way that our colleagues collect data on viewership are through YouTube/Other online content viewing programs, PEG central, through website/web analytics, and through the on demand feature where feature is available.

### Q11 What methods of promoting your channel have you found most effective? Check no more than 5.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

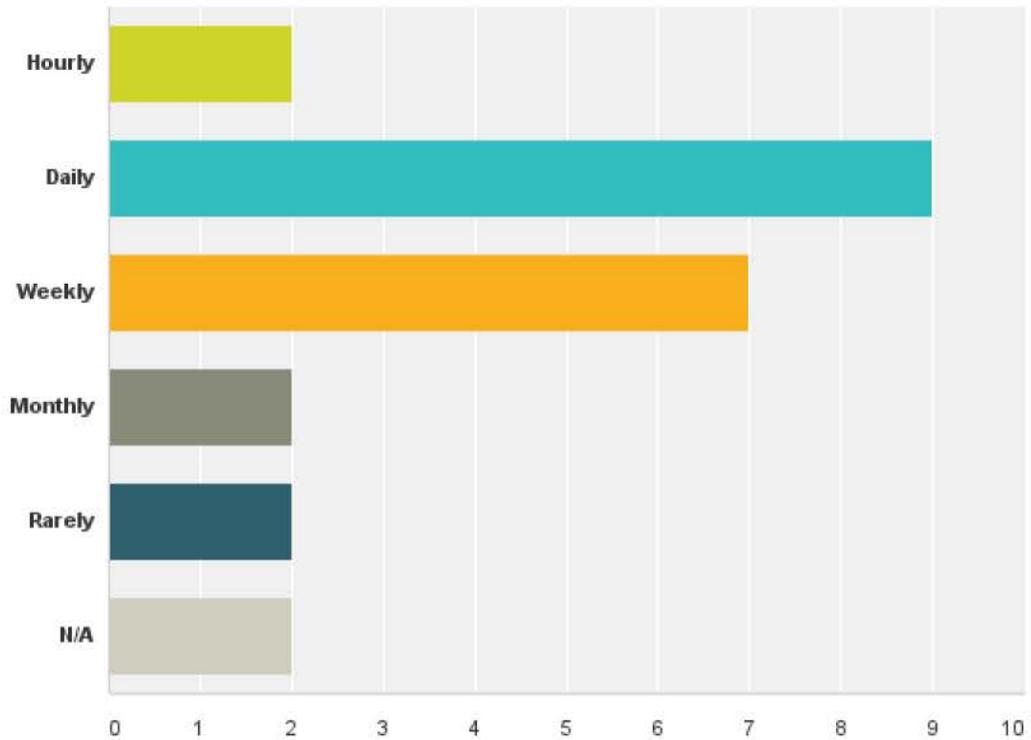


★ Responses for "Other": City Website, Cable Ad Buys, Television PSAs., Occasional Stories in local Newspaper.



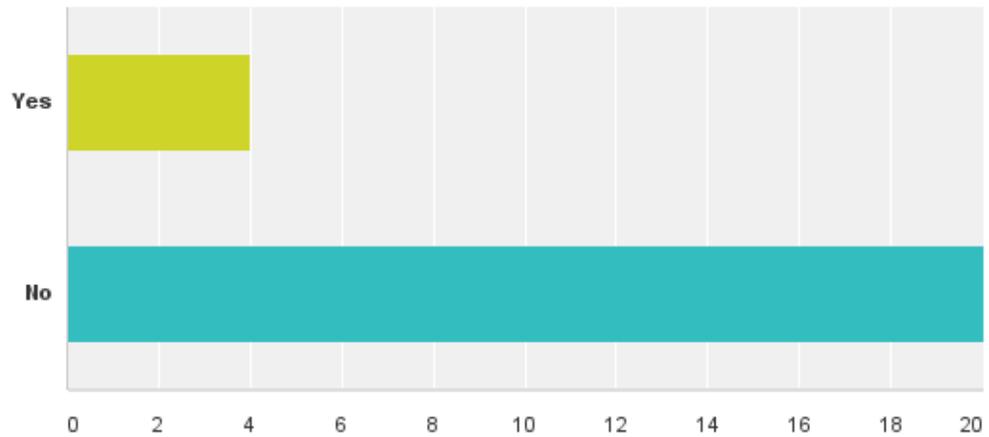
### Q12 How often do you post new content to your social media accounts? (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



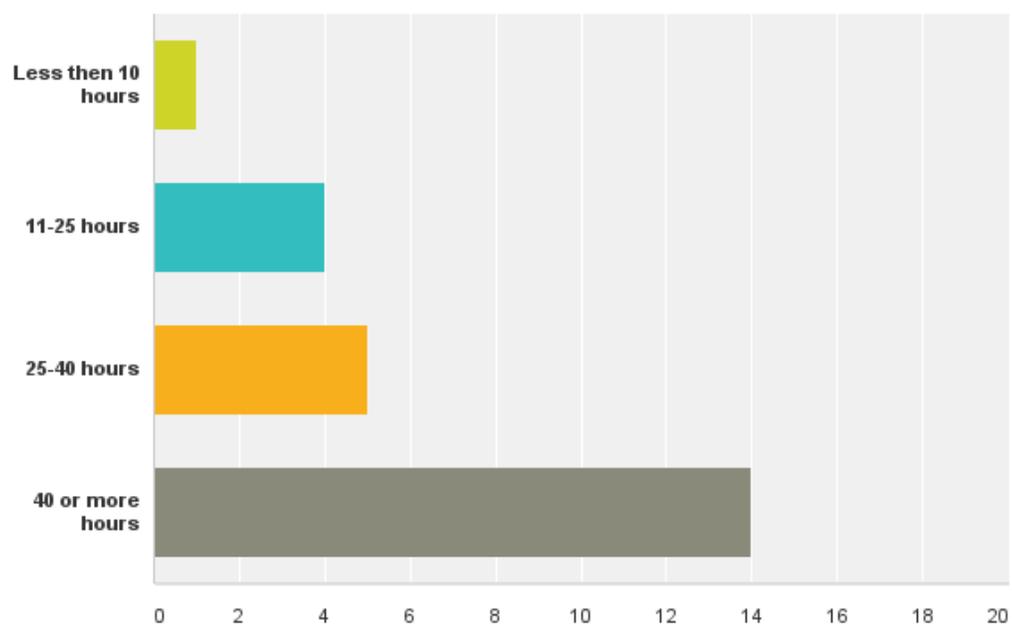
### Q13 Do you have a mobile app?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



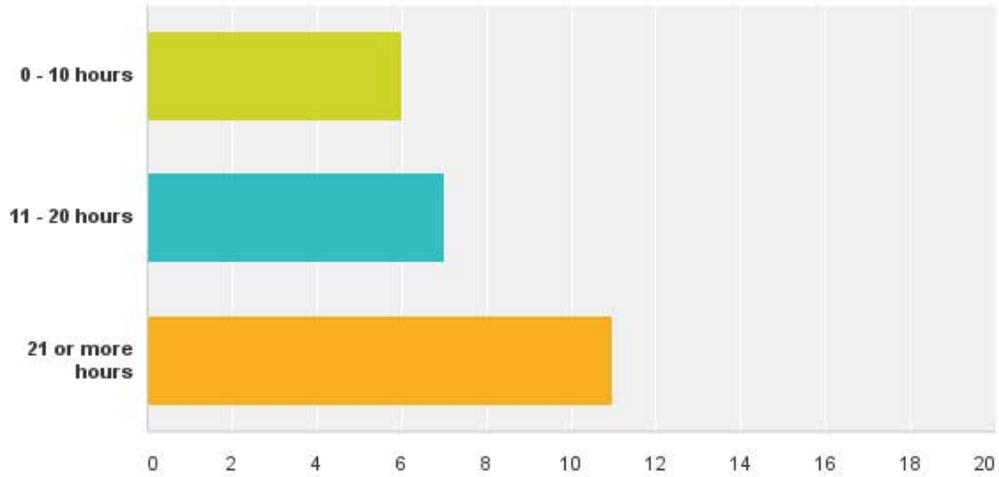
### Q14 On average, how many hours of television programming do you air per week? (Not including message/advertising screens).

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



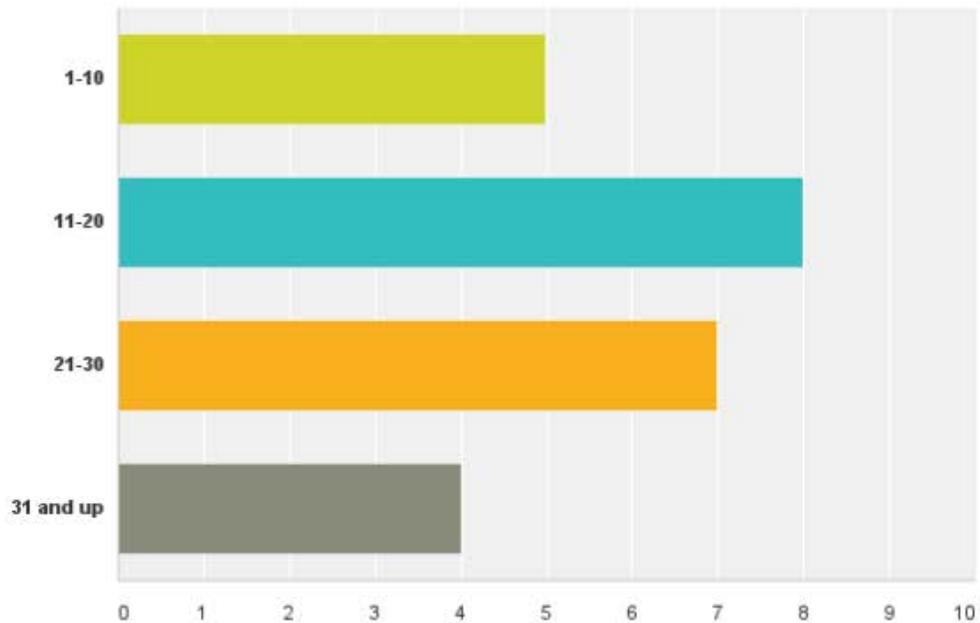
### Q15 Using your response to question number 14, how many hours is original programming?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



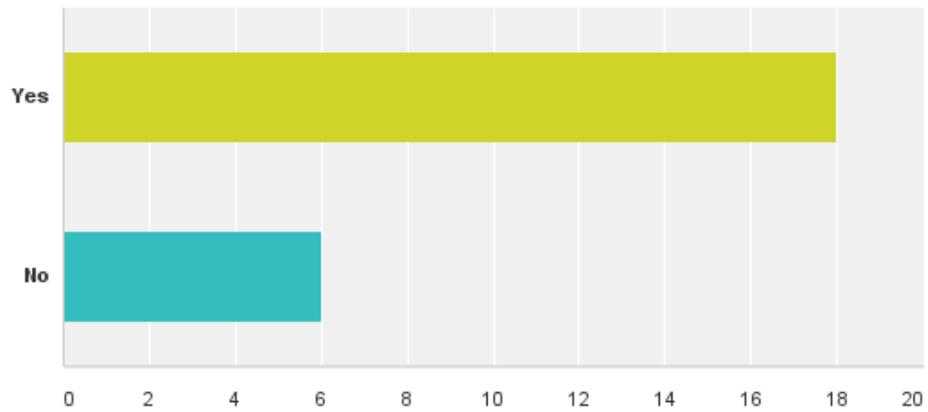
### Q16 Estimate how many original in-house productions you produce in a month (including meeting coverage).

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



**Q17 Do you augment your programming with shows from other production facilities? (i.e. neighboring communities, other access centers)**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



**Q18: If yes, what type of programming are you bringing in?**

- Talk shows, event coverage.
- Religious.
- Informational, educational, entertainment.
- Religious, PSAs.
- Documentaries.
- Talk shows, presentations, meetings.
- Talk shows, cooking shows, community events, sports.
- Talk shows, News magazines, Issue-based programming.
- Civic, community affairs programming.
- Sports, Talk Shows about Gov't.
- Oakland Community College Trustee Meetings, Crimestoppers.
- Resident Showcase' highlights local student/resident video work.
- Already-prepared content from other organizations including lectures, speeches, concerts.
- Three PBS Stations.

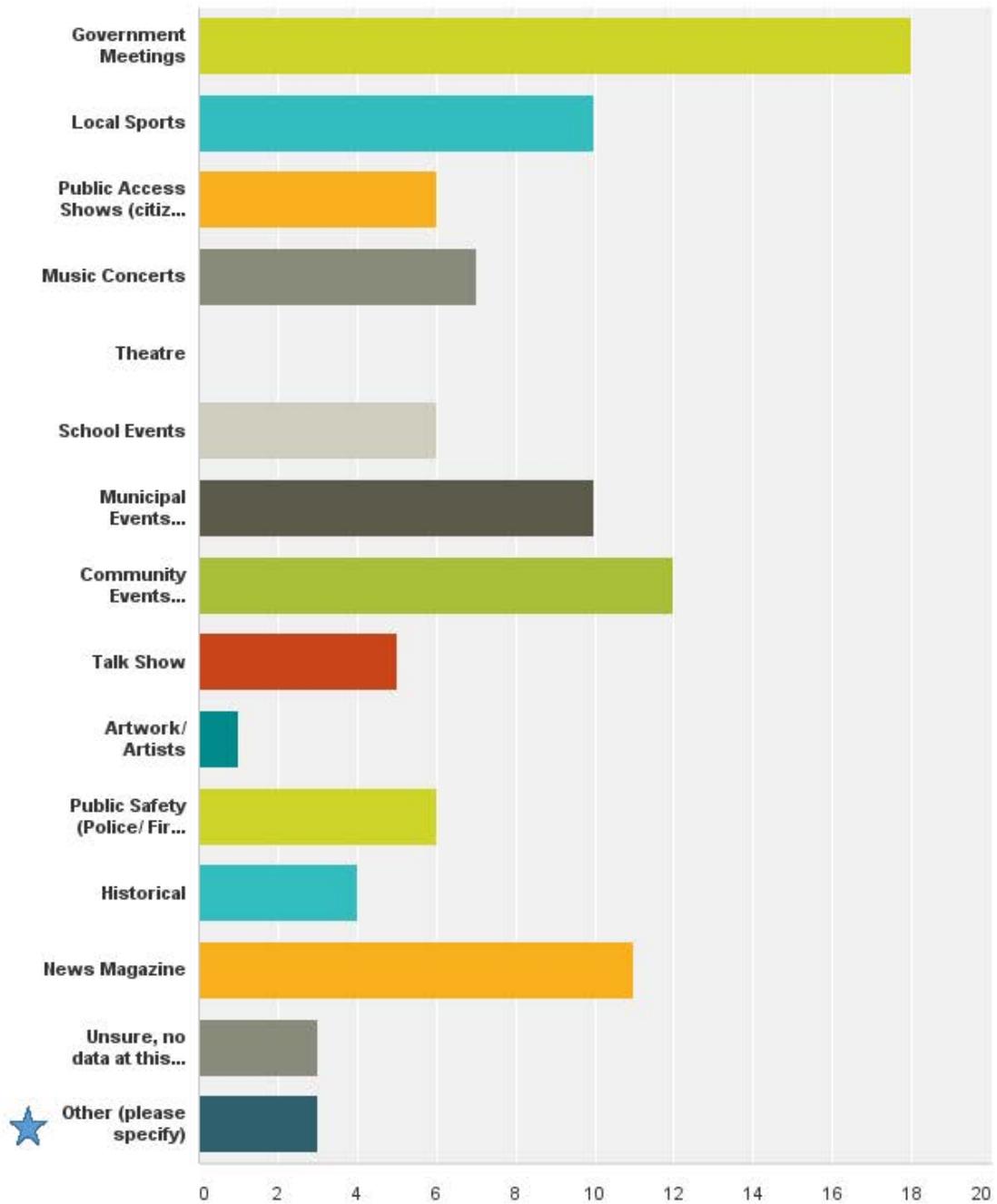
**Synopsis**

The five types of programming most frequently cited are:

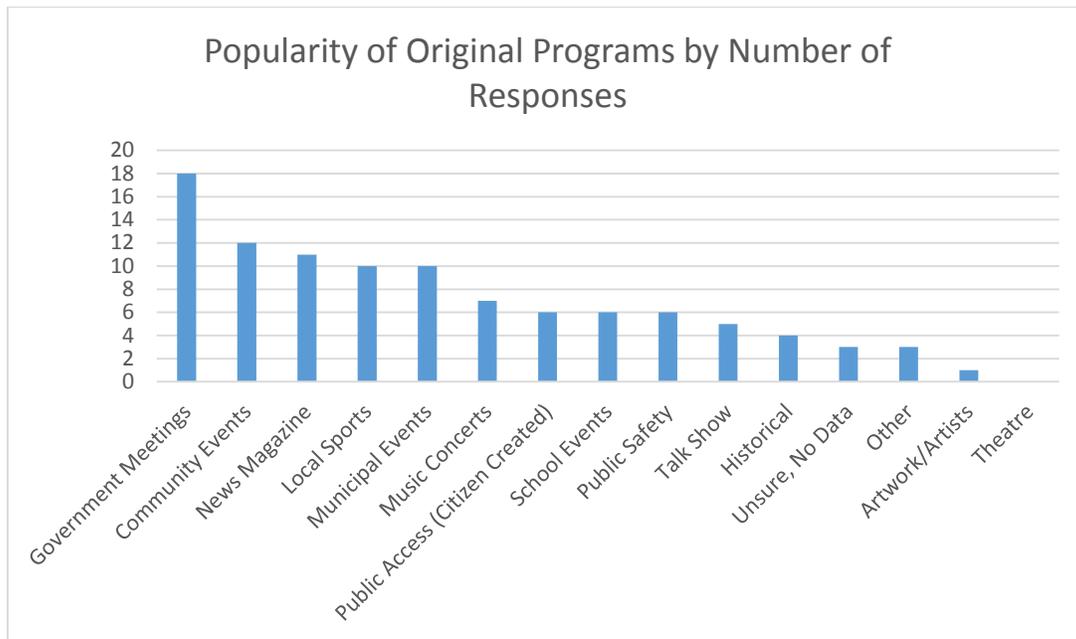
1. Talk Shows
2. Community Events
3. Presentations/Speeches
4. Religious Programming
5. Government Meetings

**Q19 Which of your original programs do you think are most popular? Please select up to 5.**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



★ Responses to "Other": News Stories, Nature/Parks, and Recreational Shows.



**Q20: What makes you think these shows are popular?**

- Content, quality and the hard work that goes into producing them.
- Feedback from viewers, hits on website.
- Content, venue, presenter. People like to know what is going on in our towns. And they like entertainment value of some programs.
- They are well produced with attention to content and production quality. In addition these programs are exclusively available on local access television. Government meetings can only be seen here.
- Government Meetings are what people watch on our PEG Central on-demand.
- Stories linked to Police/Fire/DPW, as well as large community events get most views on FB and YouTube.
- Traditional news outlets only cover local municipalities if a tornado hits them or a politician is in trouble. Actual residents are interested in what else is going on that effects them.
- Feedback, requests for DVDs, word of mouth.

## Q20 Continued:

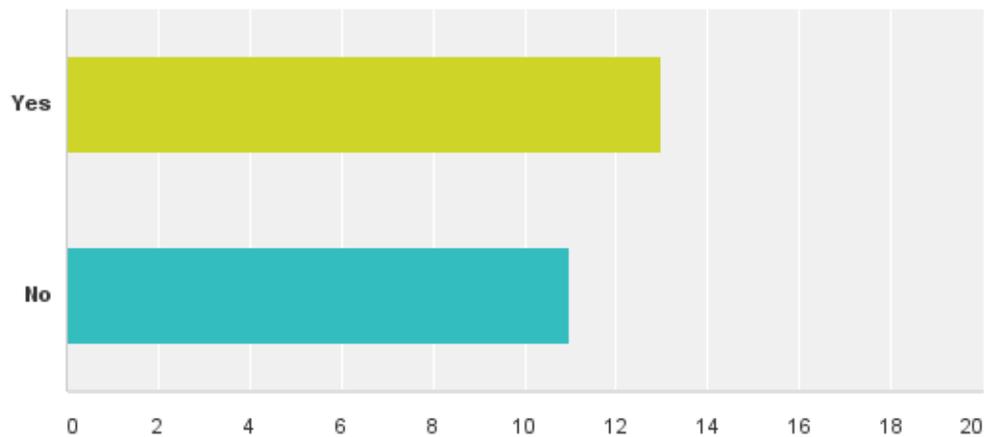
- Our programming is currently under review.
- They involve people and lots of different kinds.
- Local information.
- We receive the most comments from the community regarding these shows.
- Engaged Residents.
- Quality Production Value.
- Timely, Local Coverage.
- Usually word of mouth feedback via social media.
- Cherry Royale Parade is popular because 1/2 to 1 million people come to town for the Cherry Festival. Women of an Uncertain Age brings in notable people from the community. Up Front Fridays is consistent and talks about upcoming local events. We have a lot of retirees who are very interested in local Government issues so the Government meeting do really well when there are hot topics.
- Informal feedback.
- People see themselves or their relatives.
- They are localized.
- Hot Topic, informational.
- Variety of topics covered...entertaining...dynamic graphics.
- Online stats from YouTube and Vimeo.

## **Synopsis**

The most frequent answers as to why we think residents are watching our channels include: (1) Quality, (2) Localized, (3) Online stats/feedback, and (4) Content.

## Q21 Do you share programming with other municipalities/ access centers?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



## Q22: If yes, with whom and how?

- WKTU through a LiveU, other interested channels using a web stream.
- With CMN, SWOCC, Royal Oak & West Bloomfield.
- Saline - Dropbox
- Troy, WB, Royal Oak. Producer of every program is in charge of sharing programs with other towns.
- Shows are mostly shared upon request. In the past when we have reached out and offered gardening, cooking, car shows and other programming that we produce in a series format, we have shared via DVD (again by request; staff is limited, so we haven't automatically uploaded shows.) The program that we share the most is Inside Macomb with Macomb County Treasurer Ted Wahby. He takes pride noting that he began his show in the 1980s. It is the longest running show in the county. He has a distribution method to help us get DVC Pro tapes and DVDs to stations throughout the county.
- "Occasionally we share with Shelby Television programs of interest. We used to share sports programs until we stopped recording games. "Legally Speaking" is distributed by the MCBF to area stations."
- Waterford...via DVD.
- Oakland County, Oakland Community College

## Q22 Continued:

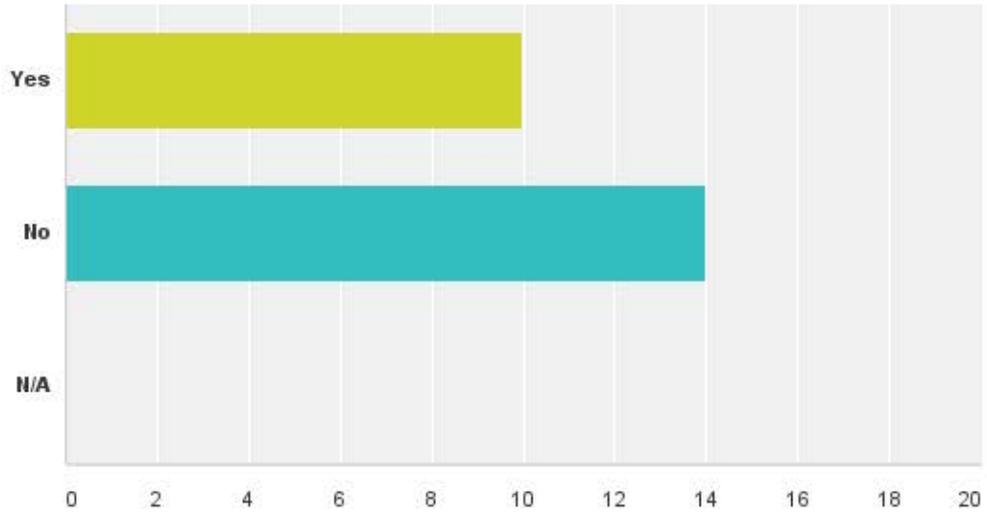
- Shelby TV
- Bruce, Clinton, Harrison, Macomb, Shelby & Washington Twps., Richmond, Romeo, Sterling Heights, Utica & Warren on DVD and MediaFire video sharing through NATOA.
- Programming is shared between us, GRTV and WCET.
- We run two stations and are in discussion with the 2 local education channels to see how we can collaborate better.
- Shelby TV, Chippewa Valley Schools, Clinton Twp., Mt. Clemens, Sterling Heights. DVD exchange or Server downloads.
- When our local producers decide to submit their programs to other centers. That happens on occasion.
- The government and schools channels are separate from ours and have their own programming. We just facilitate the broadcasting from the head-end which is located in our facility.

## **Synopsis**

The main method for those who described how programming is shared was through DVD.

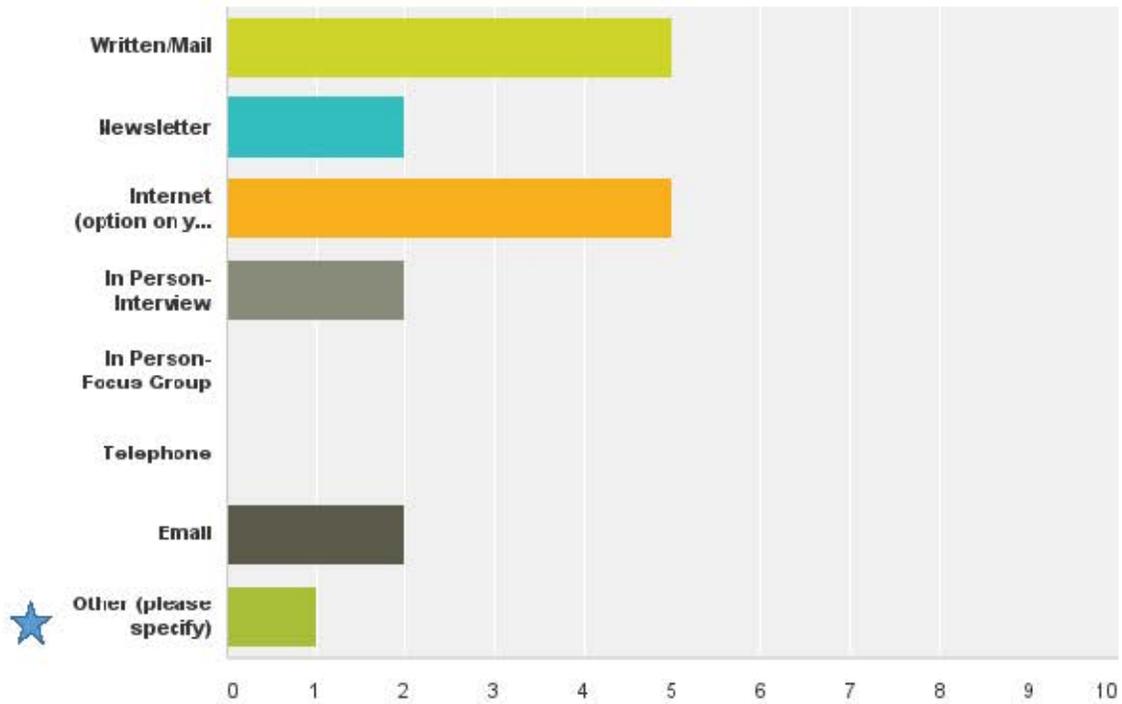
### Q23 Have you surveyed your community?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



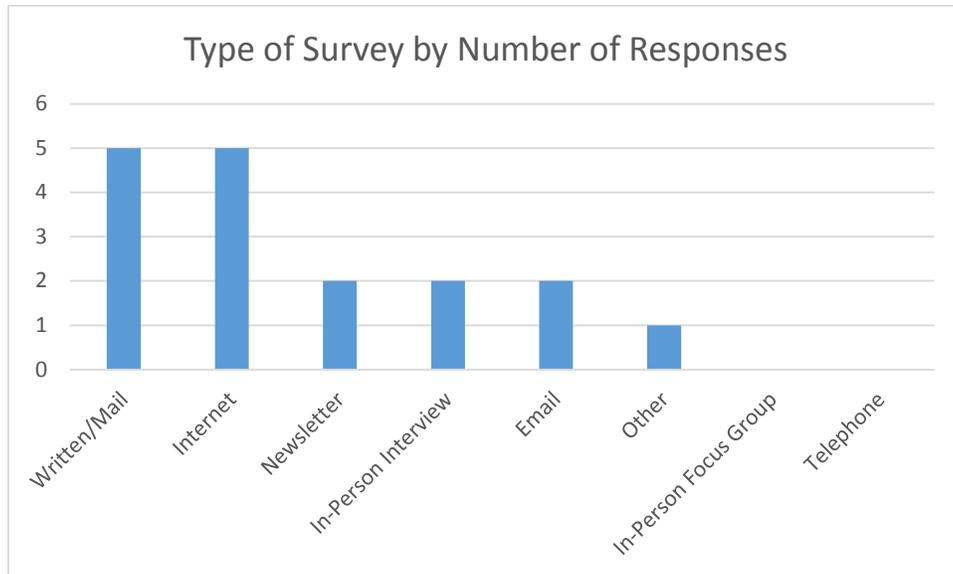
### Q24 If yes, what type?

Answered: 11 Skipped: 13



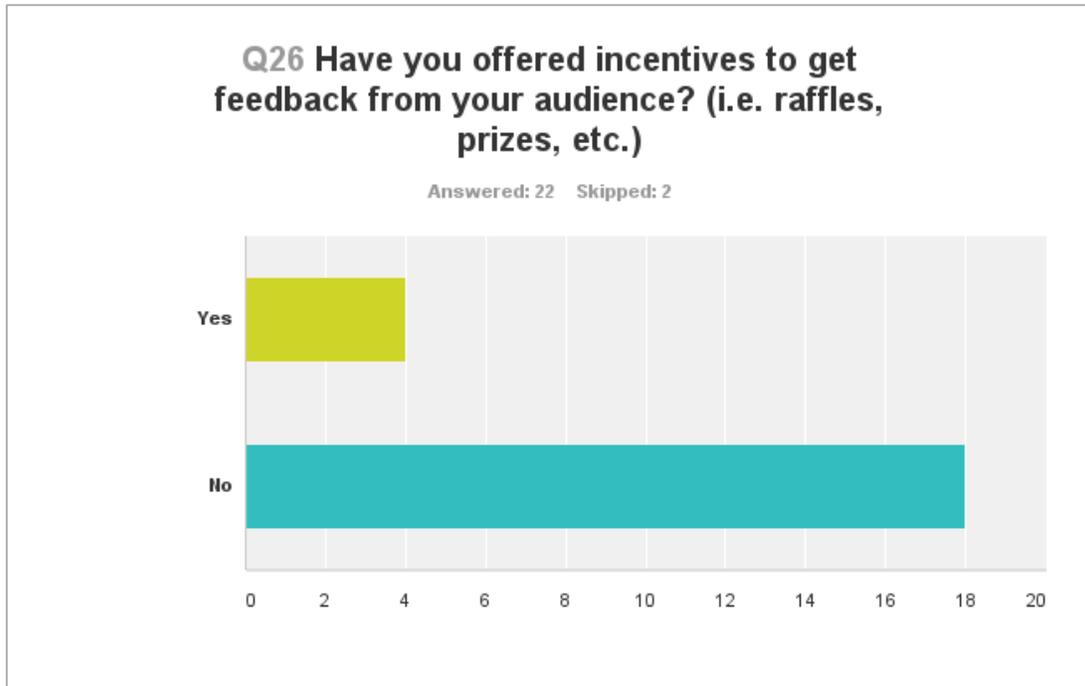


Responses for “Other”: We always invite comment, but haven't conducted a formal survey.



### **Q25: If yes, how often do you survey your community?**

- Every three years, sometimes longer
- Every 1-2 years
- Occasionally done by survey firm. Not done in recent years.
- Surveys are all government services city wide. None specific to PEG channel alone. We have undertaken three surveys city wide since 2000.
- Every other year as part of the broader, City survey put out by the Mayor's Office.
- Once a year.
- We're trying to create one right now.
- We surveyed them officially about 15 years ago. Since then, we've done unofficial surveys annually at business fairs.
- Few times a week, after meetings or new show produced.
- Periodically, but not in the last 5 years

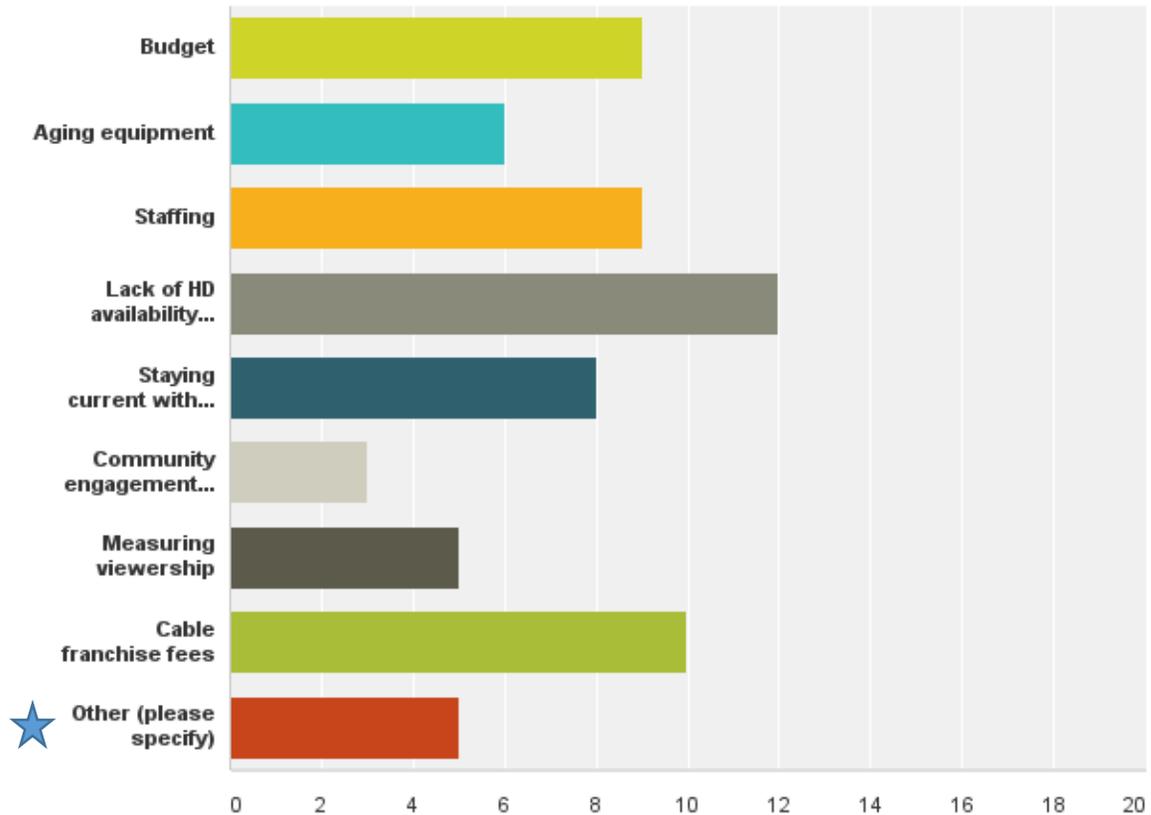


**Q27: Please share any other methods to get feedback from your audience if applicable.**

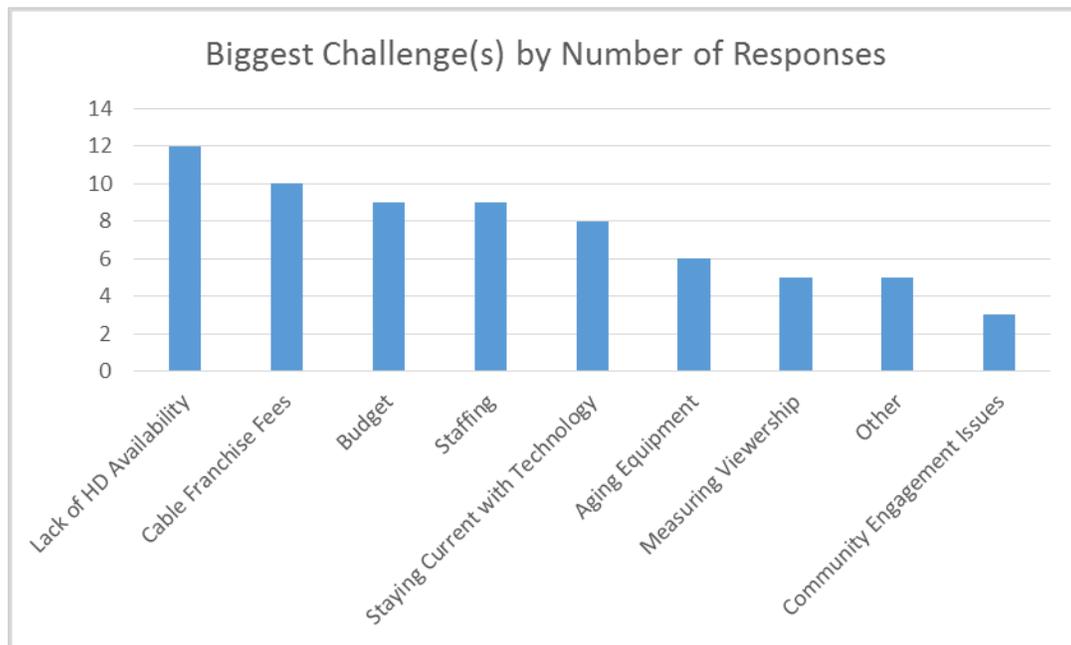
- Written comments as part of our subscriber survey
- We added twitter hashtags to our programming
- Although we obviously don't deliberately do this, when a program is off because of some technicality we often hear immediately from viewers asking what's going. That indicates they are watching. We also get anecdotal feedback.
- Facebook
- Trivia during a show, win a gift card, etc.
- Prior to myself taking over the position of station manager there was a GoPro given away in an attempt to garner more volunteer support. From my understanding very little tangible success came from this.
- Social media
- Encounters with people in township hall from regulars, and when on location shoot.

**Q28 In the next 3-5 years, what do you feel is your biggest challenge(s)? Choose up to 3.**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



★ Responses to “Other”: Viewers moving away from Cable TV to VOD, Time shifting and Viewership leaving Cable, Challenge to increase participation and viewership, PEG Fees, and Relevant, quality programming.



**Q29: Please share any ideas regarding overcoming challenges facing the PEG community.**

- Trying to negotiate in franchise renewal so that we continue to get 3% PEG fees.
- Try to stay current with technology and be as available and "access"able as possible to meet the needs of the community.
- We need to share information more, especially in light of Comcast's proposal to merger with Time-Warner and from GreatLands. A lot of us are going through contract renewals now. Let's keep each other posted on status of negotiations.
- Relevant community programming delivered as viewers expect will keep PEG in demand.
- We are operating with a staff of two (was just one for four months until recently) but have just received our first new cameras/editing equipment in nearly 10 years. Other equipment in constant state of disrepair. Very difficult conditions. Interested in ideas but have none to share.
- The big challenge is to make PEG so valuable and desired that it will be funded if and when the current revenue stream dries up.
- Making elected officials aware and care about PEG. We're more than a budget line.

## Q29 Continued:

- Continue to work with the local schools and governments that want us to do programming. Produce the highest quality of that programming.
- We need a VOD presence on NetFlix, Hulu or other venue.
- Personally I feel we need to look toward getting PEG fees to apply to internet access and make ourselves more relevant as a resources for the creation of video content with less focus on the dying medium of television. How can we be more adaptable to the viewing habits of a modern audience?
- We are working to get more non-profits into our facility to use MCTV to promote their services and events. Also hold summer camps for kids to get more youth involved.
- Being seen as relevant.
- Educating decision makers.
- Forge partnerships with schools, etc.
- More frequent meetings with PEG operations to share information and experiences.

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

June 5, 2015

Deborah Guthrie  
HOMTV  
5151 Marsh Road  
Okemos, MI 48864

Dear Ms. Guthrie:

It is with great pleasure that I thank you for your sponsorship and contribution of media coverage (over \$1,000 value) for the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Race for the Place 5K. Your contribution helps in our continued fight against relationship violence and stalking. Funds raised through our event will ensure that our program is able to continue to provide free and confidential support services for those experiencing relationship violence and/or stalking in the MSU and Greater Lansing area. Your support for our program has been invaluable!

There are many ways in which your support of Race for the Place helps our program to succeed. The funds raised through this event allow us to offer many services, such as emergency shelter; support groups; individual counseling; advocacy support for victims/survivors in obtaining new housing, connecting with legal resources, safety planning, and meeting other essential needs; financial assistance, such as paying fees to get a Personal Protection Order served; transportation for clients to school, work or other appointments; consultation for family members, friends and colleagues of those affected by violence; and many other much needed services. Without your support we would not be able to provide such comprehensive services to those in need!



**MSU SAFE PLACE**

Michigan State University  
219 Wilson Rd, Rm G60  
East Lansing, MI  
48825-1208

517-355-1100  
Fax: 517-432-6193

[www.safeplace.msu.edu](http://www.safeplace.msu.edu)  
[noabuse@msu.edu](mailto:noabuse@msu.edu)

We had a beautiful day and great event with almost 800 walkers and runners who participated in the 2015 Race for the Place 5K. Additionally, as in previous years, Sparty and MSU varsity athletes came out to support this family friendly event, offering medals and support to the 80 children who participated in the 100-yard dash and one mile fun run events.

We are very grateful for your continued support! We look forward to working with you again for next year's Race for the Place!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Holly Rosen".

Holly Rosen  
MSU Safe Place  
Director

Dear HOMTV Family,

I wanted to thank you for mentoring me during my time as a rookie intern. And for providing me with one of the most valuable and exciting experiences in my life.

I have grown so much as an editor, writer, videographer, and as a person. It meant the world to me, knowing you had faith and confidence in me. All good wishes to you.

Sincerely,

Chrystaline Decker



**GRANGER**

ED GILLESPIE  
Director of Customer & Public Relations

517.887.4171 D  
517.393.1670 P 517.393.0812 F

egillespie@grangerconstruction.com

6267 Aurelius Road  
Lansing, MI 48911-4230

www.grangerconstruction.com

6/5/15

Det.:

Great job on HT's 2015 Summer Monitor.

- 1) It is fun looking
- 2) Easy to read
- 3) Piled with information
- 4) And folds into a manageable package.

I know what goes into such a piece!  
Keep up the great work!

*Ed G.*

---

## Deborah Guthrie

---

**From:** LuAnn Maisner  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 03, 2015 2:56 PM  
**To:** lynn ochberg  
**Cc:** Deborah Guthrie; Frank Walsh  
**Subject:** RE: Congratulations

Hi Lynn,

Hope you are well. We were very fortunate that this issue of the Meridian Monitor was dedicated to promoting our wonderful resources and recreation opportunities. We have to thank our Communication Department led by Deb Guthrie. She and her staff deserve the credit for this publication

FYI- the Arts and Crafts Marketplace is still going strong. It operates on the fourth Sunday of each month throughout the summer and even has its own Facebook page! Nice work in getting that started.

Thanks again for your kind words.

LuAnn

-----Original Message-----

**From:** lynn ochberg [mailto:nlv33@comcast.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 03, 2015 2:25 PM  
**To:** LuAnn Maisner  
**Subject:** Congratulations

Hi LuAnn, Congratulations on the best yet mailer full of summer fun opportunities. You have all outdone yourselves in giving the citizens of Meridian Township the VERY BIG PICTURE of our wonderful town. Thanks heaps, Lynn Ochberg



June 1, 2015

Ms. Deborah Guthrie, Cable Coordinator  
Meridian Township  
5151 Marsh Road  
Okemos, MI 48864

Dear Ms. Guthrie:

As part of Comcast's commitment to keep you informed about important developments that affect our customers in your community, I am writing to notify you of some changes to the channel lineup. Customers are being notified of these changes via bill message.

Comcast was just informed that WLNS-Live Well (channel 297) programming was discontinued as of May 30, 2015.

Also, effective on or about June 4, 2015, WSYM Bounce (channel 290) will be added to the Limited Basic Service.

Additionally, effective on or about July 20, 2015, ESPN GamePlan and ESPN Full Court Pay-Per-View packages will no longer be available for new subscription. Most of the events featured on these packages will be available with ESPN3.

As always, feel free to contact me directly at 517-334-5686 with any questions you may have

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John P. Gardner".

John P. Gardner  
Senior Manager, External Affairs  
Comcast, Heartland Region  
1401 E. Miller Rd.  
Lansing, MI 48911

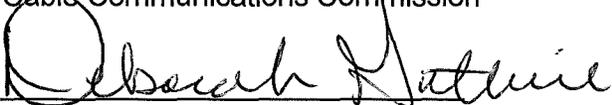
**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN**

**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION**

**OLD  
BUSINESS**

# MEMORANDUM

TO: Cable Communications Commission

FROM:   
Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director/PIO

DATE: June 26, 2015

RE: Comcast Update and Budget Request

Meridian Township signed a uniform franchise agreement with Comcast effective June 9, 2015. The new agreement continues the 5% Franchise Fee and includes an additional 1% PEG Fee from Comcast's annual gross revenues for a period of 10 years from the date of issuance. The inclusion of the PEG Fee is an increase in annual revenue for the Communications Department and HOMTV of over \$100,000. Approximately \$50,000 in additional revenue from Comcast PEG Fees will be received over the remainder of 2015.

As a result of the new uniform franchise agreement with Comcast and the additional revenue to be received, staff recommends the Commission reallocate money originally budgeted for the refranchising process to other needs, such as equipment, print materials and promotional items for HOMTV and the Communications Department.

If the commission were to consider reallocating the money originally budgeted for refranchising and expenditure of PEG Fees to be received, staff is requesting to purchase these equipment items as well as a replacement recruitment board (\$2,500) for career fairs.

Items	New/Replacement	Quantity	Cost
<b>HD modulator/demodulator for HOMTV</b>	<b>replacement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>
<b>Windows Laptop</b>	<b>replacement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$500</b>
<b>Portable PA system</b>	<b>replacement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>
<b>Small P2 Camera</b>	<b>replacement</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>Live remote streaming device</b>	<b>new</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>Incodex encoder for live broadcasting</b>	<b>new</b>		<b>\$4,600</b>
<b>Smartboard</b>	<b>new</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
<b>LED Studio Lights</b>	<b>replacement</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$12,100</b>
<b>Total Field/Editing Equipment</b>			<b>\$64,700</b>

The Cable Communications Commission moves **TO APPROVE THE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT ITEMS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF UTILIZING ANTICIPATED, BUT NOT TO EXCEED, PEG FEE REVENUES RECEIVED FROM COMCAST.**

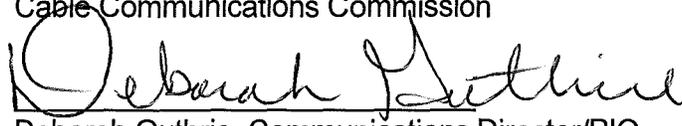
The Cable Communications Commission moves **TO APPROVE STAFF TO REALLOCATE MONEY ORIGINALLY BUDGETED FOR THE REFRANCHISING PROCESS, THAT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY DUE TO THE UNIFORM AGREEMENT, TO OTHER AREAS OF THE BUDGET AS NEEDED.**

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN**

**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION**

**NEW  
BUSINESS**

# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Cable Communications Commission  
**FROM:**   
Deborah Guthrie, Communications Director/PIO  
**DATE:** June 26, 2015  
**RE:** 2016 Draft Budget Recommendation

As a result of additional revenue from Comcast PEG Fees for the remainder of 2015, the projected 2015 budget is expected to increase from \$690,100 to \$740,100. Please refer to the 2015 revenue section of the summary. Attached is the 2015 summary for Cable TV Funds; at the time of this memo, the 2016 summary has not been created. In 2016, the anticipated Cable TV revenue will be \$790,000.

### Capital Purchases:

Listed is the Equipment Purchase Plan for 2016. The 5 year plan reflects an equipment replacement and upgrade plan for cameras, microphones, editing systems, etc. 2016 is the first year that studio cameras are added to the 5 year plan. Our current studio cameras were purchased by Comcast with the 2005 Franchise Agreement and are in need of replacement, as well as an upgrade to current technology standards. Because it is a large purchase item, staff recommends obtaining a loan for a period of 3-5 years at a low interest rate for the \$220,000 in HD Studio Cameras. These cameras will be the last equipment at HOMTV to be upgraded to HD.

### 2016 Equipment Budget

Items	New/Replacement	Quantity	Cost
HD Studio Cameras/Teleprompter	replacement	1	\$220,000
Recabling ceiling	replacement		\$2,000
Small P2 Camera	replacement	1	\$6,000
imac editing computer	replacement	2	\$10,000
laptop graphic computer	replacement	1	\$5,000
Remote Editing/Switcher System	new	1	\$25,000
<b>Total Field/Editing Equipment</b>			<b>\$268,000</b>

The Cable Communications Commission moves to MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDED CAPITAL ITEM EQUIPMENT PURCHASES FOR THE 2016 CABLE TV FUND.

### Staffing:

Staff recommends that the two part-time staff members become full-time staff members in 2016. Currently they each work 29 hours per week. The duties and requirements necessary by these positions is considered a full time work load. Their absence is felt by full time staff members who fulfill those duties while they are not here, including overtime hours to perform the increasing communications needs. The current staffing levels are the same today as they were years ago even

though the workload has significantly increased to include publishing and marketing, brand management and township promotions, campaign strategies, content management of two township websites, social media management, and CAMTV.

The Cable Communications Commission moves to APPROVE DIRECTOR GUTHRIE WORK WITH THE FINANCE DIRECTOR TO BUDGET AN INCREASE OF TWO PART-TIME STAFF MEMBERS TO TWO FULL-TIME STAFF MEMBERS. IF THE BUDGET ALLOWS, MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE TOWNSHIP TO INCREASE PART-TIME STAFF TO FULL-TIME STAFF.

## CABLE TV FUNDS

**Narrative:** The highest priority of the Communications Department is to provide residents with an increased access to transparency in governance with relevant information and in a timely fashion. A diverse means of methods through the utilization of current and best communication practices is used to provide information to residents and neighboring municipalities. An advisory board, the Cable Communications Commission, approves operating policies and makes recommendations concerning fiscal matters to the Township Board. Operating funds are primarily generated from franchise fees and peg fees derived from cable service providers according to Public Act 480.

<b>REVENUE SUMMARY</b>				
<u>Account Classification</u>	2013 Actual	2014 Original Budget	2014 Projected Total	2015 Budget
Franchise Fees-Cable TV	\$624,058	\$610,000	\$620,000	\$630,000
PEG Fees	56,489	54,000	56,000	60,000
Miscellaneous Revenue	60,916	200	3,000	100
Donations/Agency Fees	200	0	126	0
Interest	0	0	0	0
	<u>\$741,663</u>	<u>\$664,200</u>	<u>\$679,126</u>	<u>\$690,100</u>

**Franchise Fees - Cable TV:** The revenues from Cable Franchise Fees are received from the 5% Franchise Fee that is charged on the annual gross revenues of Comcast Cable Services and AT&T Uverse Services for use of the public rights of way.

**PEG Fees:** Cable PEG Fee revenues are received from the 3.36% that AT&T Uverse is charged on their gross revenues as support for the cost of public, education, and government access facilities and services.

**Donations/Agency Fees:** Includes the programming application fees, municipal shared services fees, and sponsor revenues for CAMTV.

<b>STATEMENT OF FUND BALANCE</b>		
	<u>Nonspendable</u>	<u>Restricted</u>
Fund Balance as of December 31, 2013 (per audit)	\$5,286	\$266,876
Anticipated Operating Surplus (Deficit) for 2014	<u>(5,286)</u>	<u>5,286</u>
Estimated Available Fund Balance as of December 31, 2014	0	272,162
Anticipated Operating Surplus for 2015	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Estimated Available Fund Balance as of December 31, 2015	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$272,162</u>

## CABLE TV FUNDS

<b>EXPENDITURE SUMMARY</b>				
<u>Account Classification</u>	2013 Actual	2014 Original Budget	2014 Projected Total	2015 Budget
Personnel Costs	\$382,480	\$374,085	\$405,729	\$417,217
Operating Costs	150,661	168,306	157,860	157,374
Outside Services	47,972	76,388	89,063	91,009
Debt Service	9,430	0	0	0
Capital Items	56,218	40,700	26,474	24,500
	<u>\$646,761</u>	<u>\$659,479</u>	<u>\$679,126</u>	<u>\$690,100</u>

Personnel Costs: Includes a 1% wage increase and 4 full-time employees and 2 part-time employees at 29 hours each. Professional TV talent, paid interns, and freelancers are also utilized throughout the year. In addition approximately 30 unpaid student interns are hired and trained each year for producing the Board meetings and special events.

Capital Items: Production equipment.

<b>PERSONNEL SUMMARY</b>			
<u>Position/Title</u>	2013	2014	2015
Communications Director	1.0	1.0	1.0
Senior Production Manager	2.0	2.0	2.0
Production Assistant	1.0	1.0	1.0
Administrative Assistant II	1.0	1.0	1.0
	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>	<u>5.0</u>
Interns and Freelancers	40	40	40

## CONTRACTS/WARRANTY BUDGET

### 2015

#### Monthly Contracts

Adobe Software Contract		\$2,400	
Constant Contact		\$720	
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500	
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700	
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900	
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$3,000	
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156	
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900	
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600	
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840	
<b>Sub-total</b>			\$24,716

#### Annual Warranties

FlipSnack		\$360	
Social News Desk		\$2,665	
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300	
Constant Contact		\$720	
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,900	
QLogic Switch Maintenance VSAN - video network		\$800	
Scale Logic - Video Server Hardware (Raid/JBOD) Maintenance Warr		\$2,500	
Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200	
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343	
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995	
<b>Sub-total</b>			\$18,783

#### Total Contractual Services Budget

**\$43,499**

### 2016

#### Monthly Contracts

Adobe Software Contract		\$5,100	
Constant Contact		\$720	
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500	
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700	
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900	
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$6,000	
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156	
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900	
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600	
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840	
<b>Sub-total</b>			\$30,416

#### Annual Warranties

FlipSnack		\$360	
Social News Desk		\$3,865	
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300	
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,995	
QLogic Switch Maintenance VSAN - video network		\$800	
Scale Logic - Video Server Hardware (Raid/JBOD) Maintenance Warr		\$2,500	
Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200	
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343	
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995	
<b>Sub-total</b>			\$19,358

#### Total Contractual Services Budget

**\$49,774**

## CONTRACTS/WARRANTY BUDGET

### 2017

Monthly Contracts		
Adobe Software Contract		\$5,100
Constant Contact		\$720
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$6,000
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$30,416</b>
Annual Warranties		
FlipSnack		\$360
Social News Desk		\$3,865
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,995
QLogic Switch Maintenance VSAN - video network		\$800
Scale Logic - Video Server Hardware (Raid/JBOD) Maintenance Warr		\$2,500
Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$19,358</b>
<b>Total Contractual Services Budget</b>		<b>\$49,774</b>

### 2018

Monthly Contracts		
Adobe Software Contract		\$5,100
Constant Contact		\$720
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$6,000
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$30,416</b>
Annual Warranties		
FlipSnack		\$360
Social News Desk		\$3,865
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,995
QLogic Switch Maintenance VSAN - video network		\$800
Scale Logic - Video Server Hardware (Raid/JBOD) Maintenance Warr		\$2,500
Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$19,358</b>
<b>Total Contractual Services Budget</b>		<b>\$49,774</b>

## CONTRACTS/WARRANTY BUDGET

### 2019

Monthly Contracts		
Adobe Software Contract		\$5,100
Constant Contact		\$720
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$6,000
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$30,416</b>
Annual Warranties		
FlipSnack		\$360
Social News Desk		\$3,865
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,995
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Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$19,358</b>
<b>Total Contractual Services Budget</b>		<b>\$49,774</b>

### 2020

Monthly Contracts		
Adobe Software Contract		\$5,100
Constant Contact		\$720
TV Guide Channel		\$3,500
Granicus Video web hosting service		\$8,700
*Granicus Open Platform - Mobile programming		\$3,900
TVUPack Service	Estimate	\$6,000
Comcast HOMTV Studio Access		\$156
Comcast Fire Station 1		\$900
Comcast Fire Station 2		\$600
Comcast HOMTV Internet		\$840
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$30,416</b>
Annual Warranties		
FlipSnack		\$360
Social News Desk		\$3,865
Annual HOMTV webpage hosting service		\$2,300
Broadcast Pix Annual Warranty - video switcher		\$3,995
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Scale Logic - Video Server FiberJet Software Maintenance Warranty		\$3,200
EZNews/Ross Production Technology - Annual Maintenance Agreement		\$1,343
Total Info - annual bulletin board service, CAMTV		\$995
<b>Sub-total</b>		<b>\$19,358</b>
<b>Total Contractual Services Budget</b>		<b>\$49,774</b>

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN**

**CABLE COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION**

**COMPLAINTS/  
COMPLIMENTS**

# Individual Video Provider Customer Intakes

**Complaint Number** 2015-009

**Date** 4/22/2015

**Name** John Ruh

**Street Address** 1808 Birchwood Dr

**City / Zip** Okemos 48864-

**Work Phone** **Ext**

**Cell Phone**

**Home Phone** (517) 349-2955

**Email**

**Best Time to Call**

**Best Time to Service**

**Service Provider** Comcast

**Reason for Calling** Complaint

**Unburied Cable**  **Waiting for Service**  **Missed Service Call**  **Cable Box**   
**Bad Reception**  **Cable Out**  **Cannot Phone**  **Other**   
**Bad Treatment**  **Bad Information**  **No Response to Request**

**Problem Description** Unable to connect with customer service at Comcast; on hold for 45-50 minutes each time  
Unhappy with the increases in fees over and over again. He feels that Comcast is burying programming costs in fees so that subscribers can't eliminate or change their expenses. He feels the most inexcusable costs are labeled Broadcast TV fee for retransmitting and now Regional Sports fees for transmitting sports networks. He would like to be able to

**Problem Before?** Yes **Ongoing**   **MPSC Information**  
**Assigned Staff** Andrea Smiley/Deborah Guthrie **Given**

**Staff Response** Stated that I would take down all of the customers information and concern and forward to John Gardner, Comcast Representative for resolution.  
4.29.15 Follow up call to Mr. Ruh. He stated that he received a call from a Comcast Representative but needed to call them back.  
5.1.15 Mr. Ruh stated that he spoke with a representative from Comcast and all of his questions were answered; however, he was not happy the the gentlemens attitude, stating that he was receiving pricing as if he was a new customer and when that ended he would not have that same pricing. Also, the fees will remain as the fees are. He felt that his only option, per the representative, was to purchase a bundle deal in order to say money. His is a long time customer of Comcast, 15-20 years, and feels the cost/fees are excessive.

5.14.15 Received a call from Comcast customer, John Ruh, this morning. Apparently, the representative that contacted him to explain the fees on his bill (see email below) was supposed to be sending him information on the various packages and pricing offered by Comcast; TV and Internet. Even though the conversation was initially about fees, he requested this information because the representative suggested bundle packages to maybe save him some money. Mr. Ruh agreed to looking at the packages and pricing, but is yet to receive any information. Mr. Ruh is asking for this information to be sent to him, but also a call from a Comcast representative about the delay. Thank you in advance,

6.9.15 Mr. Ruh stopped in to the Communications Department, yesterday. He stated that he never received a phone call from the Comcast Representative. He was very unhappy with the customer service he has been receiving. He was actually interested in adding services, but needs a representative to return his call. Mr. Ruh was informed by staff that his information would be passed along.

# *Individual Video Provider Customer Intakes*

***Resolution*** 5.1.15 Mr. Ruh spoke with a representative from Comcast ; 5.14.15 Comcast Customer Care Representative to contact Mr. Ruh; 6.12.15 John Gardner, Sr. Manager, Government Affairs informed the Communications Department that Mr. Ruh had been contacted and the requested information was sent to Mr. Ruh, again.

# Individual Video Provider Customer Intakes

**Complaint Number** 2015-012

**Date** 6/3/2015

**Name** Indian Lakes

**Street Address** 4754 Arapaho Trail

**City / Zip** Okemos 48864-

**Work Phone** **Ext**

**Cell Phone**

**Home Phone**

**Email**

**Best Time to Call**

**Best Time to Service**

**Service Provider** Comcast

**Reason for Calling** Inquiry

**Unburied Cable**  **Waiting for Service**  **Missed Service Call**  **Cable Box**

**Bad Reception**  **Cable Out**  **Cannot Phone**  **Other**

**Bad Treatment**  **Bad Information**  **No Response to Request**

**Problem Description** Work being done; Comcast flags, cables and torn up lawn. Why is work being done when it was already done in that area? Reported by a neighbor to Township Trustee Angela Wilson.

**Problem Before?** No **Ongoing**   **MPSC Information**

**Assigned Staff** Deborah Guthrie, Communications Directo **Given**

**Staff Response** Question was referred to Comcast Representative, John Gardner.

**Resolution** A cable replacement is being done in the utility easement. The crews have or are attempting contact with homeowners regarding landscaping and will restore the area upon completion. Information provided by John Gardner, Sr. Manager, Government Affairs on 6-4-15

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

**VIDEO  
SERVICE  
PROVIDER(S)**



**May 5, 2015**

## **Comcast Introduces Voice Controlled TV Remote**

**X1 viewers can search, set recordings and get recommendations with natural speech.**

PHILADELPHIA, PA

Comcast today announced the consumer launch of its new remote control that allows customers to navigate tens of thousands of shows and movies on the X1 platform with their voice. The new Xfinity remote with voice control <<http://www.xfinity.com/voiceremote>> lets viewers search for networks, shows and movies; set DVR recordings; get recommendations; navigate Xfinity On Demand and more.

"Say it and see it. It's that simple," said Sree Kotay, Comcast Cable's Chief Software Architect. "We want viewers to get to the shows and movies they love quickly, and we've built a remote control that's smart, fast and intuitive. You don't have to learn a new language or speak like a robot. Just press the blue button, say what you want to watch and it appears on screen. It's easy, just like watching TV should be."

The Xfinity Remote with voice control recognizes thousands of common commands including things like:

Changing the channel: "Watch ESPN"

Searching for movies or shows: "The Walking Dead"

Browsing Xfinity On Demand: "Show me kids movies"

Setting a recording: "Record Saturday Night Live"

Finding sports teams, games and events: "When do the Phillies play?"

Getting recommendations or seeing what's popular on TV right now: "What's trending?"

The remote even recognizes hundreds of popular movie quotes. As an example, saying "Life is like a box of chocolates" will find the movie Forrest Gump.

The voice remote is available to all eligible X1 customers. New customers will get the remote during their installation and existing customers can either go to an Xfinity Store to pick one up for free or order online at [xfinity.com/voiceremote](http://www.xfinity.com/voiceremote) <<http://www.xfinity.com/voiceremote>> (shipping & handling charges may apply).

In addition to voice search, the new remote is backlit for nighttime viewing and uses radio frequency (RF4CE) transmission that lets users point anywhere when channel surfing and store their X1 set-top box in a cabinet or another room. It also is more ergonomic with contours that comfortably fit in the viewer's hand. The setup is simple, and X1 customers can program it to control their TV and AV receiver or sound bar in just a few easy steps <<http://www.xfinity.com/voiceremote>> .

From a technology perspective, the remote records sound from a microphone when the Mic button is held down and then uses voice-over-RF4CE™ ZigBee® technology <<http://corporate.comcast.com/comcast-voices/comcast-voice-remote-texas-instruments>> to compress and transmit that recording over a low bandwidth link to the X1 platform. Using natural language processing (NLP) coupled with advanced entertainment metadata and relevancy algorithms, X1 easily gets you to what you want.

This device is also another example of Comcast's commitment to making its products and services more accessible <<http://corporate.comcast.com/news-information/news-feed/tom-wlodkowski-empowering-people-through-technology>> . The company recently launched the industry's first "talking guide <<http://corporate.comcast.com/news-information/news-feed/x1-talks-comcast-launches-industrys-first-voice-guided-tv-interface>> " for customers with a visual disability, and with the availability of this new remote, Comcast has become the only company to elegantly combine "voice in" and "voice out" in one entertainment experience.

"Voice control is a solution for customers with a visual disability or a physical challenge like arthritis," said Tom Wlodkowski, Vice President of Audience, Comcast, who focuses on the

usability of the company's products and services by people with disabilities. "But it's also empowering for kids, seniors or anyone else who wants a new and easier way to discover content. Voice search is the great equalizer and a terrific complement to our talking guide."

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EPA

Yahoo reached a deal with the National Football League to stream a game on Oct. 25 exclusively on Yahoo apps and websites.

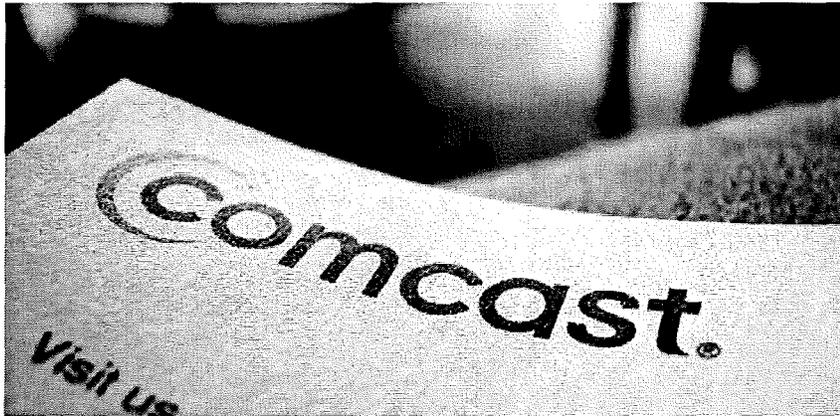
The International Series Game based in London will feature the Buffalo Bills playing the Jacksonville Jaguars. The game kicks off at 9:30 a.m. ET to attract a larger global audience. "We're thrilled that the NFL has chosen Yahoo for this historic opportunity," said Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer in a statement.

## Want a lower Comcast bill? Complain to the FCC

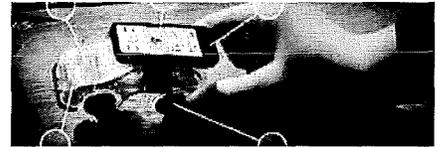
Cable customers get quick response after claims of unfair billing practices.

by Jon Brodtkin - Jun 23, 2015 10:50am EDT

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Alyson Hurt

Broadband providers are probably fielding some new complaints now that the Federal Communications Commission has begun accepting formal objections under its new net neutrality rules.

And it seems they are responding quickly. Two customers, one of Comcast and one of Time Warner Cable, told Ars that the cable providers gave them price breaks last week shortly after they complained to the FCC about what they claim are unfair billing practices.

These two complaints weren't about net neutrality violations, but both customers we talked to seemed to be spurred into action by the FCC expanding its complaint system. Moreover, the FCC's net neutrality order also reclassified broadband providers as common carriers, allowing for penalties if their billing practices are "unjust" or "unreasonable." The FCC has not said exactly what constitutes unjust or unreasonable pricing.

Customers could already complain about billing before the net neutrality order took effect, but the FCC now has more power to make sure they're being treated fairly. And internet providers have more reason to take the complaints seriously.

"We do not resolve individual complaints on these issues," the FCC says on the complaint website.

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**FCC VOTES FOR NET NEUTRALITY, A BAN ON PAID FAST LANES, AND TITLE II**

Internet providers are now common carriers, and they're ready to sue.

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"However, the collective data we receive helps us keep a pulse on what consumers are experiencing, may lead to investigations and serves as a deterrent to the companies we regulate."

The Comcast customer we talked to is Massachusetts resident Christopher Ferguson. Nearby providers RCN and Verizon FIOS do not serve his address, so he's stuck with Comcast unless he wants slower Internet service.

His complaint to the FCC argued that Comcast is artificially inflating cable TV subscriber numbers by making it cheaper to buy a bundle of TV and Internet service than Internet service alone. Here's what Ferguson wrote in his complaint:

My only available broadband ISP (Comcast) refuses to lower my overall price of service when I remove cable television from my service package. I was "forced" into taking a package initially when I signed up for internet service that included a cable subscription despite expressing that I only wanted Internet service. The price for this package was 35 dollars a month. Internet service on its own without cable was 65 dollars a month. Due to the obvious price difference, I took the cable package reluctantly and have just never watched cable television. For the past 3 years my bill has been slowly creeping upwards until it has now reached over 80 dollars a month for the same service level. I tried to reduce my monthly payments by simply removing cable service, but that would actually INCREASE my bill. In what world does reducing services provided increase the overall cost of something? In a normal, non-monopolistic world, a lunch combo of a sandwich (\$6 individually) and drink (\$5 individually) would be offered for \$10 as an incentive to get both and save a bit of money. In Comcast's world, if you were buying lunch you'd pay 10 dollars for a sandwich, and a drink, but 20 dollars for just the sandwich or just the drink in order to force you in a financial sense into choosing the combo even if you weren't thirsty for the drink and wanted to save money by not buying one.

Why does Comcast do this? My belief is that it is to continue to make money from advertisers. In order to keep advertising dollars high, cable subscriber numbers need to remain high. At this point "cord cutters" are so abundant, that if they didn't INCREASE your price for not getting cable and just getting internet, their cable subscriber numbers would take a dive along with their advertising revenue.

This practice to artificially keep cable subscriber numbers high is harming consumers and preventing them from purchasing what they want and only what they want in order to save money. Please put a stop to this practice by requiring Comcast to offer me a lower monthly rate if I cancel my cable service rather than increasing my rate if I cancel a service I don't want.

I would go elsewhere with my business, but there is no other broadband company to switch to that provides high speed service as defined by the FCC.

The FCC forwards complaints to Internet service providers, and they are required to respond to the commission and the customer within 30 days.

## Comcast relents, lowers Ferguson's bill

Comcast responded to Ferguson on Thursday last week, a few days after his complaint.

"They first tried to offer me various packages involving cable that would still increase my rate," he told Ars. "At the very end they offered a slightly reduced bill with the same level of Internet service and no cable. I will be returning my cable box soon. I also made it plain in the call that I'm still standing by my complaint and that I think their business practices harm consumers as this rate was only offered to me after I complained and they were required to respond, not before, when I was asking plainly with normal customer service representatives."

The Comcast representative told Ferguson that his new price was "promotional" and would "return to regular retail pricing after one year."

But based on his experience, Ferguson says he thinks complaining to the FCC may be a more effective way to get a lower bill than simply calling Comcast. "I find it amusing that at the beginning of the call she admitted my bill would go up if I canceled my cable service (as I had been told several times before) but at the end of the call there was suddenly a promotion that lowered my bill if I got rid of my cable service," he told Ars. "The fact that I had to complain to the FCC to get this 'deal' doesn't mean that my complaint to the FCC is any less valid, due to the fact that they continue their business tactic to anyone who doesn't actively complain."

We spoke with Comcast about Ferguson's case. A company spokesperson told Ars that "the best way for a customer to get an issue resolved is to contact us. We have a number of packages and

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offers, and we'll work with customers to find what best meets their interest and budgets."

The spokesperson could not say whether Ferguson would have gotten the same or a better deal by contacting Comcast directly, though.

On the merits of Ferguson's complaint about bundling, Comcast said only that "the FCC required us to offer standalone broadband service as a condition of the NBCUniversal deal and set a price for it, but didn't dis-allow bundling."

In 2012, Comcast paid an \$800,000 "voluntary contribution to the US Treasury" to settle allegations that it failed to adequately market the standalone broadband plan that was required as part of its purchase of NBCUniversal. Comcast was also forced to extend its commitment to offer a reasonably priced standalone plan for an extra year, but the extended commitment expired in February of this year.

## Time Warner Cable customer decries "monopolistic pricing"

The Time Warner Cable customer we spoke to is Jason Klimek of upstate New York, who complained to the FCC about how TWC charges higher prices in cities where it faces less competition.

Here's what he wrote to the FCC:

In areas where Time Warner Cable faces actual competition, their prices are far lower than in my market. Currently, I get 50 mbps down and 5 mbps up for \$69.99 per month.

Time Warner offers Ultimate 100 (100 mbps), Ultimate 200 (200 mbps) and Ultimate 300 (300 mbps) for \$44.99, \$54.99, and \$64.99 respectively in various other markets where competition has forced down prices. These prices reflect Time Warner's pricing in Manhattan, where they face competition from Verizon and Cablevision.

Time Warner Cable has "taken advantage of being the only high speed internet provider by doubling their prices for their same offerings as elsewhere in the country, even in the same state!" he continued. "The Commission should require that Time Warner Cable offer pricing that is in parity with, at the very least, the rest of a given state. This is a clear example of monopolistic pricing contrasted with the same company's pricing when faced with competition. Moreover, the Commission should condition Time Warner's merger with Charter on bringing price parity to gouged regions."

Klimek filed the complaint on Friday, June 12, and got a call from Time Warner Cable the following Monday.

"They started off by stating that at \$64.99, I was getting a promo price down from \$107, at which point, I told them their website in no uncertain terms states the original price is \$69.99 and I was receiving promotional pricing of \$64.99," he told Ars. "Moreover, nowhere on their website does it claim that \$107 is the actual price of service. The person was very flustered on the phone and got her supervisor. Her supervisor still could not address my concerns, as my concerns require changes to pricing structures and not a simple fix. The supervisor basically hit the talking points about service, etc. and said she would look into whether there was a promotion they could offer me. She talked to her manager and they decided to credit my bill for two months worth of service. As an attorney, I was quick to state that if I accept this, I in no way waive my rights to pursue this FCC complaint and I do not consider this matter closed. They confirmed this and stated it would not affect my rights to pursue this FCC complaint."

At one point, "the supervisor conceded that their pricing in Manhattan is different because 'of the number of people and availability of competition,'" according to Klimek. "Predictably, they could offer absolutely no justification for the disparity in pricing where I pay \$64.99 for a service that is 1/6 the speed of their identically priced service in NYC."

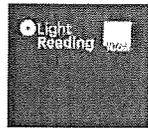
A Time Warner Cable spokesperson told Ars that "the best way to get the TWC Internet plan that's right for your needs and budget is to contact us," rather than to complain to the FCC.

Time Warner Cable said it isn't true that it faces no competition. "We believe TWC Internet offers consumers a better Internet experience and value than DSL, but we have to compete against DSL providers every day to win and keep customers," the company said.

Cable Internet far outstrips the speeds of DSL, so winning that battle shouldn't be too hard.

Time Warner Cable also defended its standard prices, saying they are the same across all markets. But the company conceded that its "promotional offers... can vary by market, they frequently change, and they're based on many factors, including our available product offerings, services included in the





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# Sling TV Adds Polaris+ & Turner Classic Movies



NEWS WIRE FEED  
LIGHT READING  
6/19/2015

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Sling TV announced today that it added Maker Studios' Polaris+ to our "Best of Live TV" core package – still priced at \$20 per month. Exclusive to Sling TV customers, Polaris+ is an extension of Maker's Polaris brand and features long-form original programming, including gaming, pop culture, comic and live-event programming.

Sling TV also added Turner Classic Movies (TCM) to the "Hollywood Extra" pack, giving film enthusiasts access to classic films, documentaries and original series for \$5 per month with a "Best of Live TV" subscription. Classic film fans will have 24/7 access to the best silent and foreign films, film-related documentaries and contemporary classics.

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## Remembering Comcast's Ralph Roberts



The US cable industry has lost a legend.

Comcast Corp. (Nasdaq: CMCSA, CMCSK) announced Friday morning that its Co-Founder and longtime CEO and Chairman, Ralph Roberts, passed away Thursday night in Philadelphia. The 95-year-old Roberts, who led Comcast for more than 45 years, died of natural causes.

**BREZNICK UNBOUND**  
**ALAN BREZNICK,**  
 Cable/Video  
 Practice Leader  
 6/19/2015

Ralph Roberts -- a cable pioneer remembered and respected throughout the industry for his trademark bow ties, business savvy, gentle wit, grace and general integrity -- entered the business in the early 1960s in a classic American Dream way. A Wharton School graduate and US Navy veteran, he held various jobs after leaving the service, including selling golf clubs and working for the canned music pioneer Muzak Company. He then moved on to the Pioneer Suspender Company, which he eventually took over.

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Fearing that his suspender company couldn't compete against the advent of Sansabelt's belt-less pants, Roberts sold Pioneer and used the proceeds to start buying local community antenna television systems in rural areas. With his two partners, Daniel Arron and Julian Brodsky, he bought a 1,200-subscriber cable system in Tupelo, Miss., called American Cable Systems for \$500,000 in 1963. The partners then incorporated their company as Comcast Corp. in 1969, a name that Roberts crafted by combining the words communications and broadcasting.

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As the US cable industry grew over the next few decades, Comcast expanded by leaps and bounds, buying up other cable operators in droves. By the time the 30-year-old Brian Roberts succeeded his father as company president in early 1990, Comcast had become a \$4 billion company and one of the nation's leading cable operators.

In one of the rare instances of a successful generational transfer of a major company, Brian Roberts has followed in his father's footsteps, turning Comcast into North America's biggest cable, media and entertainment conglomerate with nearly \$69 billion in annual revenues and 140,000 employees. Largely in recognition of this feat, Light Reading inducted the younger Roberts into its Hall of Fame last year. (See Light Reading Hall of Fame 2014.)

But, even as son Brian took over full control of Comcast, the elder Roberts never faded totally from the scene. As Brian often noted publicly, Ralph remained a trusted adviser to him and his company on business matters as Comcast developed into a dominant force in the US communications industry.

Warm tributes to Ralph Roberts have been pouring in from top industry executives, cable trade groups, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Tom Wheeler and other luminaries all day. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Suzanne Roberts, their four children and eight grandchildren.

— Alan Breznick, Cable/Video Practice Leader, Light Reading

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**Reinventing the Pay-TV Business** (3)  
 In LR's inaugural BTE Video Summit, speakers will look at how the video industry is changing and how service providers can cope with those changes.

**Gigabit States Anyone?** (5)  
 At the Gigabit Cities Live confab in Atlanta, speakers and participants float suggestions for the nation's first Gigabit State.

**Title II: What Chilling Effects?** (4)  
 Despite the dire warnings of top telco and cable execs, Gigabit service rollouts and announcements have only sped up since the FCC passed its Title II rules less than three months ago.

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## AT&T Looks Ahead & Abroad for Digital Life



AT&T is getting ready to update its Digital Life home security and automation service, and is envisaging more opportunities outside the US.

Kevin Peterson, SVP of AT&T's Digital Life Unit, says that the service will have a revised app and user interface (UI) in the next 30 days.

"We'll launch the UI and then we'll add in location," Peterson says. Video services are also on the menu for the future.

AT&T's Digital Life service is a home security and automation system that is installed by technicians, and can be controlled over a variety of devices using the operator's wired and wireless networks. It competes in the US with older home security specialists like ADT and numerous newer entrants, including many cable providers. (See [AT&T Launches Digital Life Service in 15 Markets.](#))

For all the latest news from the wireless networking and services sector, check out our dedicated mobile content channel here on Light Reading.

AT&T Inc. (NYSE: T) is also expecting to further expand outside the US with Digital Life. AT&T has already licensed Digital Life technology to Telefónica in Europe. (See [AT&T & Telefónica Extend Digital Life to Europe.](#))

Peterson says AT&T is now talking to other carriers in Europe and the Middle East, too.

Digital Life is currently in 82 markets in the US. Peterson is reluctant to put an exact number on how much that might expand this year, but allows that the service might be in around 90 markets by the end of 2015.

— Dan Jones, Mobile Editor, Light Reading

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DAN JONES,  
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## Cloud Lifts Video Infrastructure Market



NEWS ANALYSIS  
**MARI SILBEY**,  
 Senior Editor,  
 Cable/Video  
 6/22/2015

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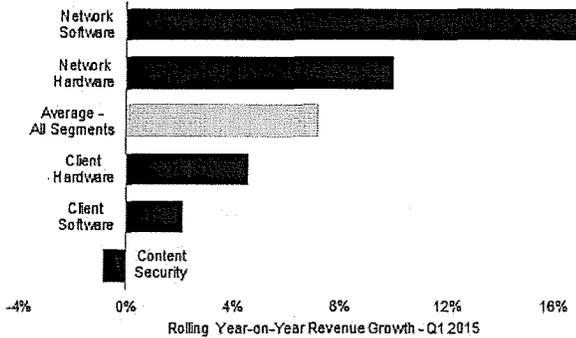
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The impending death of the set-top may be overstated, but increasing interest in cloud-based services is driving faster growth in video network infrastructure than in client-side hardware and software.

### Video Infrastructure Market Growth



According to Synergy Research Group, total video infrastructure revenues topped \$10 billion in the first three months of the year, marking the fourth quarter in a row that revenues have exceeded that threshold. The sector grew 7% on a year-over-year basis, but the network hardware segment grew 10%, while network software was up a dramatic 17%. Overall, network hardware and software made up 51% of market revenues, with client-side hardware and software accounting for 44% of the whole. The last 5% came from earnings related to content security solutions.

Synergy's chief analyst and research director, John Dinsdale, didn't want to over-emphasize the shift away from set-top spending, stating in a note that "the market for set-top boxes and associated hardware & software remains huge, but network hardware & software continue to increase their share of the video infrastructure revenue pie."

On the client side, vendors in the service provider market are starting to focus on high-end gateways that combine multiple functions including video, higher-speed data, WiFi and smart home services. (See Comcast Readies D3.1 & RDK-B.)

However, the Synergy report shows that the highest revenue growth in client-side hardware and software is coming from lower-end media streaming devices. Dinsdale confirmed that the report covers not only traditional set-top companies, but also makers of retail devices including Amazon.com Inc. (Nasdaq: AMZN) and Google (Nasdaq: GOOG).

Want to know more about cloud services? Check out our dedicated cloud services content channel here on Light Reading.

Meanwhile, on the network side of the video infrastructure business, the largest revenue increases in the first quarter came from TV Everywhere, cloud

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DVR software and content discovery solutions, along with CCAP hardware and media data centers. Each of those categories has plenty of room for continuing growth as well. Data from Parks Associates, for example, suggests that the number of cloud DVR subscribers will quintuple by 2018. (See [Cloud DVR Is a Killer App... Just Not in 2015.](#))

CCAP hardware is still in the early stages of deployment. The first integrated CCAP chassis hit the field only in the last few months, while Cisco Systems Inc. (Nasdaq: CSCO), the largest network hardware vendor, just debuted its CCAP solution in May. (See [TWC Delivers First QAM Video Over CCAP and Cisco Rolls Out New CCAP Chassis.](#))

Aside from Cisco, which leads all vendors in video infrastructure hardware and software, the top video hardware companies, according to Synergy, are Arris Group Inc. (Nasdaq: ARRS), Pace plc and Technicolor (Euronext Paris: TCH; NYSE: TCH), with Arris planning to acquire Pace before the end of the year. (See [Arris to Acquire Pace for \\$2.1B.](#))

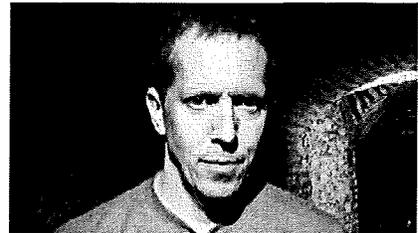
The leading video software companies behind Cisco are NAGRA, Arris and Rovi Corp. .

— Mari Silbey, Senior Editor, Cable/Video, Light Reading

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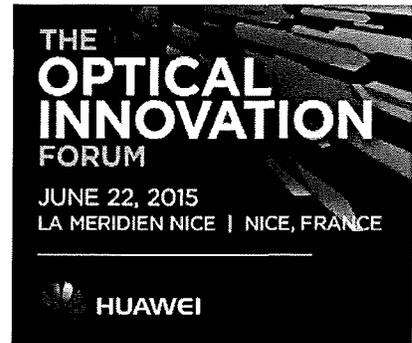


## Choosing a Technology Supplier? Consider Changing Your Selection Criteria

Network architects aiming to upgrade their networks to support agile, open, virtualized services in the 21st century need to consider new criteria when choosing between technology suppliers.

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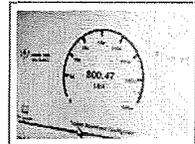
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